



Washington State Fusion Center INFOCUS



MONDAY — 15 Nov 2021

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HEADLINE	11/13 Effort: fix ports supply chain issues
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/money/business/effort-underway-to-fix-supply-chain-issues-at-west-coast-ports/281-bcd0afa6-1bdc-4f23-bc76-8041898b9dc8
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — The price of shipping a container from Asia to the U.S. has increased significantly. The Northwest Seaport Alliance says that a container shipped to Seattle that cost \$2,000 in 2019 can cost as much as \$20,000 now.</p> <p>The value of the goods being shipped inside that container can also influence the charge, along with the volume discounts that big shippers can receive, which could be as low as five times the cost of two years ago.</p> <p>The cost is just one factor in how backed up ports on the West Coast are, including Seattle and Tacoma, which together handle cargo as the Northwest Seaport Alliance.</p> <p>On Wednesday, the ports themselves, trucking companies, labor, railroads and other links in what's called the supply chain, met with two members of the Federal Maritime Commission which regulates internet ocean transportation.</p> <p>"So, when you add the cost of shipping onto the cost of the goods, you're going to have an inflation factor," said Commissioner Louis Sola.</p> <p>It's not just the cost of shipping. It's weeks, if not months, of delays in getting goods to the U.S. and on their way to cities inland.</p> <p>"What we're seeing primarily is a lot of manufacturing slowdowns," said fellow Commissioner Carl Bentzel. "So, if you're not getting the widgets that you need to go into your automobile, if you can't get tires onto the automobile, you have to slow down production."</p> <p>Much has been made of the shortage of computer chips made in Asia that go into cars assembled in the U.S. The shortage of new cars on dealer lots drives up the price, and that also drives up the price of used cars, again. These facts are cited as factors in the new October inflation numbers.</p>

	<p>Over the months, different links in the supply chain have been drivers in the slowdown at the ports. A few months ago, it was a lack of trains. Now, it's a shortage of chassis, the steel frame and truck wheel trailers that are snapped onto containers allowing them to be put onto the open road to their final destination or shuttling containers between docks and railyards.</p> <p>To free up chassis, many empty containers are being stacked in whatever free space can be found, including Port of Seattle's Terminal 46. Until a few months ago, Terminal 46 was sitting empty in preparation for being turned into a place to handle cruise ships.</p> <p>Now, empty containers are stacked high throughout the structure, along with parts of Terminal 5 in West Seattle.</p> <p>But the problem doesn't stop in Seattle either. "In Tacoma, we have a similar facility," said NW Seaport Alliance CEO John Wolfe.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/14 More rain, high winds for western WA
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/weather/weather-blog/atmospheric-river-weather-rain/281-1f0b5632-1e4e-47cf-a6d5-c0bc24d976b8
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — Western Washington is dealing with more stormy weather as another atmospheric river dumps rain on the region.</p> <p>An atmospheric river is a long, narrow region in the atmosphere, like a river in the sky, that brings water vapor from the tropics, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.</p> <p>The National Weather Service (NWS) said river flooding is expected to be the biggest impact, with the Cascades and Olympics taking the brunt of the storm. But winds are also expected to increase as well as the chances for landslides.</p> <p>Residents should prepare for potential tree damage and power outages.</p> <p>Below is a timeline of what to expect:</p> <p>Monday Rains will continue Monday, increasing the chances of flooding.</p> <p>A cold front arrives in the afternoon, dropping snow levels below 3,000 feet elevation.</p> <p>Flooding A Flood Watch remains in effect through Tuesday afternoon for many areas around western Washington including the Cascades from Whatcom County down to Lewis County, the Bellevue and Seattle areas and the eastern Puget Sound lowlands.</p> <p>The following rivers are under a continued Flood Warning as of Sunday evening:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chehalis River at Porter and affecting Grays Harbor County • Cowlitz River at Randle • Samish River at Burlington • Skagit River near Concrete • Skokomish River at Potlach • Skykomish River near Gold Bar • Snohomish River near Monroe and at Snohomish • Snoqualmie River near Snoqualmie Falls • South Fork Nooksack River at Saxon Bridge <p>NWS said residents can expect widespread river flooding, even in areas that haven't reached moderate or major flood stage in northern counties.</p>

Of all river flooding forecasts, the Skagit River at Concrete and Mount Vernon is forecast to reach major flooding on Monday and Tuesday, respectively.

Wind

Seattle, Bremerton, Hood Canal, Tacoma and the Southwest Interior are under a Wind Advisory until Monday at noon with south winds 25 to 30 mph and gusts up to 40 mph.

The North and Central Washington Coast is under a Wind Advisory until 4 pm. Monday with southwest winds 35 to 45 mph and gusts up to 50 mph.

The extended period of gusty wind will add additional stress to saturated soils and tree roots.

The frontal boundary is expected to cross western Washington about mid-morning on Monday where the final crescendo of rain comes through. After that, we are expected to see some clearing in the afternoon.

Cooler temperatures

By Monday afternoon, much cooler air rushes in and drops snow levels very fast, down to 1,500 to 2,000 feet Monday evening, and mountain snow is expected for all passes.

Stevens and Snoqualmie passes may receive 2-4 inches of new snow Monday night.

From Saturday afternoon through Monday night, the Olympics and north Cascades could see 7-9 inches, 3-5 inches in the central Cascades and 1-3 inches in the lowlands. Rain totals will depend on where exactly the cold front lands.

Tuesday into mid-week

Rains could linger past Monday, but the potential snow in the passes could disrupt travel.

We could also see a return of some sunshine on Tuesday.

Temperatures Monday into Tuesday will also see a startling turn. Lows Monday morning will be in the mid to upper 50s. Lows Tuesday morning will drop to the mid to upper 30s, according to the NWS.

Flooding resources

Homeowners should also consider waterproofing their homes by clearing leaves and debris from drainage systems. Flood damage can cost upwards of \$100,000.

"If you are not cleaning this drain sufficiently, your garage is adjacent to this. This will back up, flood your garage, ruin grandma's beloved belongings, your stuff, your camping gear," said Scott Rainford who works as a production manager at [All Seasons Waterproofing](#), a drainage clearing business servicing Puget Sound.

[Sandbag](#) options are also available throughout King County. Several locations are open 24/7. Obtaining sand at these sites is free of charge.

Also, anyone needing sandbags in Skagit County should contact the county's department of emergency management at 360-416-1850.

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HEADLINE	11/14 Largest public health lawsuit WA history
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/washington-lawsuit-opioid-distributors-mckesson-cardinal-health-amerisourcebergen/281-42f1f6dc-3289-4b7e-a420-7296855f6906
GIST	SEATTLE – Washington state will head to trial Monday against three major opioid distributors accused of fulfilling hundreds of thousands of suspicious orders for drugs that likely ended up on the black market.

Since 2006, the opioid epidemic has killed more than 10,800 Washington residents. Between 2000 and 2018, opioid-related hospitalizations quadrupled from 5.3 to 20.2 hospitalizations per 100,000 residents, according to state data.

The state alleges three distributors, McKesson, Cardinal Health and AmerisourceBergen, shipped over 250,000 suspicious orders to Washington between 2006 and 2014, despite having a legal obligation not to fulfill orders that would likely end up in the hands of drug dealers.

"As a result, a staggering number of prescription opioids flooded into Washington state in the last several decades," Washington State Attorney General Bob Ferguson said in Q&A about the lawsuit on Wednesday.

Distributors are required by law to monitor orders they receive, and for any that seem suspicious, they are required to report them to the Drug Enforcement Agency. Distributors are also required to investigate suspicious orders to make sure they are not likely to end up on the black market.

Over an eight-year period, the companies sent more than 2 billion opioid pills into the state, Ferguson said.

Ferguson previously [rejected a \\$527 million settlement](#) with the companies over their role in fueling the state's opioid epidemic. He said the settlement wasn't enough "considering the harm that was caused."

Should the lawsuit be successful, Ferguson will ask the court to penalize all three distributors for every time they violated Washington state law and award the state relief money that would be used to fund the state's opioid response plan.

Ferguson wouldn't comment on the exact amount of money the state is seeking from the distributors, only that he believes they need to pay "significantly more." Previously, Ferguson said the state was seeking a "[transformative amount of money](#)" to respond to the opioid crisis.

"We believe that the evidence at trial will show the facts, the law and the equities here, require these three defendants to clean up the terrible tragic crisis that we allege they fueled in our state," Ferguson said. "So we're looking forward to walking into a Washington state courtroom to hold these companies accountable for their conduct. Washington families devastated by the opioid epidemic deserve their day in court and that day comes Monday."

The trial is set to last three months, with opening statements to begin on Nov. 15 at 9 a.m. The prosecution and the defense will each get six weeks to present their argument. The trial will be streamed live on YouTube.

Washington is set to be the first state in the country to take all three distributors to a trial where a decision will be reached by a jury or judge, Ferguson said. Several other states have reached settlements with the distributors.

The suit will mark Washington's largest public health lawsuit in state history.

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HEADLINE	11/14 Mount Vernon installs temporary floodwall
SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/local/skagit-river-expected-to-reach-over-37-feet-mount-vernon-installs-temporary-floodwall
GIST	<p>The National Weather Service is predicting the Skagit River near Mount Vernon will reach over 37 feet by Tuesday, nearly reaching a record that was set in 1990.</p> <p>In preparation for what could potentially be happening, the city of Mount Vernon is putting up its temporary floodwall along its Riverwalk.</p>

“Glad to see they are prepared for it,” said Mike Haffey, a resident of Mount Vernon.

According to Haffey, who’s lived in Mount Vernon for about 70 years, and this is the first time he’s seeing this important work done in person.

“When I was in my younger days, we’d be doing the sandbags and stuff, but this wall takes a lot of that off there,” Haffey said.

The wall he’s talking about is this retaining wall that goes along the Skagit River to block rising water from blanketing downtown.

All day, city crews have been at work placing those metal bars in place because it’s expected that the Skagit will reach major flood stage by Monday morning.

On top of that, the water is expected to keep rising another 4 to 5 feet, potentially topping an old record set over 30 years ago.

“We’re closely monitoring the weather; we’re watching river levels,” said Peter Donovan, project development manager for the city of Mount Vernon.

According to Donovan, it’s important to get this work done early so if there’s an emergency or something surprising happens they aren’t left scrambling to prepare for potential flooding.

“Just ensuring that that protection is in place for our downtown businesses.”

Because Haffey says this river is nothing to mess with.

“It’s scary, especially when the stuff comes down and everything.”

Despite the flood wall in place, Haffey still has to worry about what this week will bring because he lives west of the Skagit River.

“It protects the town, but I’m on the other side of the river.”

He says the last time the river nearly got to his house was 1990, the year that record setting flood happened.

“Just keep an eye on it, watch it and be prepared.”

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HEADLINE	11/14 Carnation concern: receding, but set to rise
SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/local/river-levels-recede-but-set-to-rise-again-ongoing-concern-for-carnation-residents
GIST	<p>Thanks to a break in the weather, rivers across the region were receding Saturday. The Snoqualmie River and Tolt River at Carnation crested and water levels dropped back down. But they are expected to rise back up to flood stage Sunday.</p> <p>KOMO News checked with people in with the community in Carnation to see what people are saying and doing in light of Round 2 of atmospheric river and heavy rains.</p> <p>The Tolt River was high and flowing swiftly on Saturday.</p> <p>“It’s probably up 6 feet higher now I would say. Last week, we could walk around on the beaches down here and collect rocks,” said Pete Gillis of Carnation.</p>

But the water is receding.

And, because of a break from the recent heavy rains, Gillis and his dog can't wait to get outside. "Getting Stella out on the trail she can run free," said Gillis.

The Snoqualmie and Tolt Rivers were receding for much of Saturday. But, much more rain is in the forecast.

"We're going to have more flooding," said Gillis.

People in and around Carnation are ready for whatever happens with the local rivers.

"I'm sort of hunkering down in my apartment. I've got a lot of food stored up," said Kate McCanna of Carnation. "I was planning on having guests for dinner tomorrow night. but I'm not sure if they're going to make it. They will be coming from Monroe. not sure if that road will be closed—203."

"They come up really fast," said Bill of Fall City about the local river levels. "I'm on the Raging River. And they go down pretty fast. The Snoqualmie takes longer to go down. I don't have to do anything different even though I live on the river."

"This is "Lady" who lives here in Carnation up in Tolse Island," said Lorrie Truess.

Truess came to Carnation to care for her horse.

"I made sure I got out here today in the break in the weather so I could get them taken care of so I don't have to worry about them for the next few days," said Truess. "Luckily where our horses are at, they are high and dry. But yes, all the people who have livestock in the lower areas, it definitely affects them."

At Carnation Racing Stables, the front pasture is now a big pond.

As the horses shelter in their stables, Trudy Stotz of North Bend is working fast to take care of things outdoors during the substantial break in the rain.

"I'm almost finished. I got one pile to pick up and I've got to go muck out the stalls," said Stotz. Relentless rain is a big worry for people in Carnation.

"The worst case, if we got tons of rain, if mountains get tons of rain, we could be an island again where 203 is closed and Woodinville-Duvall highway is closed. We're just alone out here," said Gillis.

"You can only go in so many directions to get in and out of Carnation and it becomes a real issue," said McCanna.

"The big thing is the rivers will top over and (water) comes over," said Stotz.

But Stotz says Carnation Racing Stables is ready.

"The house is raised and all the barns are raised," said Stotz.

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HEADLINE	11/14 Flooding: Hamilton evacuation advisory
SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/local/town-of-hamilton-under-evacuation-order-because-of-flooding
GIST	HAMILTON, Wash. - The town of Hamilton is under an evacuation advisory Sunday as major flooding is expected on the Skagit River.

	<p>In anticipation of potential dangers from the flooding, the Skagit County Unified Command has declared a state of emergency.</p> <p>Residents of Hamilton and the surrounding area are urged to evacuate as soon as possible.</p> <p>The Red Cross will be operating an evacuation shelter out of the Baptist Church in the town of Hamilton beginning at 5 p.m. Sunday.</p> <p>The Baptist Church is located at 797 Hamilton Cemetery Rd in Sedro-Woolley and has the capacity for 35 individuals, though more space can be made if necessary. Blankets, cots, prepackaged meals, and snacks will be provided.</p> <p>When travelling to higher ground, pay try and avoid water over low-lying roadways.</p> <p>The Skagit County Department of Emergency Management can be contact at 360-416-1850.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/14 Youths fuel UK surge; warning for Calif?
SOURCE	https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2021-11-14/covid-surge-fueled-by-kids-in-u-k-a-warning-for-california
GIST	<p>Unvaccinated adolescents have been the driving force behind a stubbornly persistent Delta surge in Britain, a potential warning sign for California if inoculation rates don't improve considerably among this age group, health experts warn.</p> <p>Dr. George Rutherford, a UC San Francisco epidemiologist and infectious-disease expert, said unvaccinated 10- to 14-year-olds are driving the pandemic in the United Kingdom, with case rates among these ages significantly higher than any other group.</p> <p>Rutherford was citing data from a New York Times analysis, which said that in mid-October, school-age children in England were 15 times as likely to be infected with the coronavirus as 80-year-olds. The analysis noted that England ended mandatory mask-wearing in mid-July, and officials did not recommend vaccinations for 12- to 15-year-olds until mid-September, four months after they were available for those ages in the U.S.</p> <p>The U.K.'s surge in coronavirus cases has been uneven — climbing rapidly from mid-June to mid-July, then decreasing sharply before yo-yoing into a second peak in mid-October. There have been some signs of waning since the middle of last month, but cases remain well above the pre-Delta levels.</p> <p>A lack of vaccinations among wide swaths of adolescents as COVID restrictions were lifted has resulted in the virus continuing to spread in the U.K., Rutherford said at a recent UC San Francisco campus forum.</p> <p>“This is a consequence of failure to vaccinate. And the population that they failed to vaccinate are young adolescents,” Rutherford said. “This is being driven by younger adolescents largely, and they’ve just started a new campaign to vaccinate 12- to 15-year-olds. And only 21% of them are currently fully vaccinated.”</p> <p>The urgency to vaccinate children comes as COVID-19 hospitalizations have started to increase in parts of California. Health officials have long expected that uptick as the weather cools and more people gather indoors.</p> <p>“Unfortunately, what we were predicting, as people go indoors — that [hospitalization] rates may go up — was actually a reality,” said Dr. Regina Chinsio-Kwong, a deputy health officer in Orange County. “And even though we do have good vaccination rates, we need more people who are not yet vaccinated to get vaccinated.”</p>

The U.K.'s challenges demonstrate how its overall vaccination efforts — while better than California's — are still not high enough for herd immunity, when sustained coronavirus transmission is interrupted.

In the U.K., 67% of the population is fully vaccinated, according to [Our World in Data](#); California has 62% of its population fully vaccinated. Across the U.S., that rate is 59%, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Children and teenagers have become major sources of coronavirus infection in Los Angeles and Orange counties.

Among all pediatric groups, children 5 to 11 began suffering the [highest rate of new weekly coronavirus cases](#), displacing youths 12 to 17 as having the worst case rate, according to data released by the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health.

The change “is likely a consequence of increasing vaccination levels among teens and [previously] having no vaccinations available for those children 5 to 11,” county Public Health Director Barbara Ferrer told the Board of Supervisors just before vaccines [became available](#) to children in that age group.

But unvaccinated teenagers also have been [big drivers](#) of coronavirus transmission, L.A. County data show. “The role of children in transmitting infection is very real. And the waves of infection that can result if children are not protected are, tragically, also very real,” Ferrer said recently.

Unvaccinated 12- to 17-year-olds have a coronavirus case rate about one-third higher than unvaccinated younger adults, a group that previously had the most coronavirus infections, according to L.A. County health data.

“Unvaccinated teens now have the highest case rate among all groups of all ages” who have long been eligible for vaccination, Ferrer said.

Only 65% of L.A. County youths 12 to 17 have been fully vaccinated. By contrast, 73% of L.A. County residents 16 and older are fully vaccinated, as are 86% of seniors 65 and up.

Orange County, where only 62% of 12- to 17-year-olds are vaccinated, is seeing similar trends. In the summer, older teens had the highest coronavirus case rates among those 18 and younger. Recently, children 4 to 9 have had higher case rates than the oldest teens, and had comparable case rates to middle-aged adults.

The statistics, Chinsio-Kwong said, show that vaccinations work, as immunizations among teenagers have helped reduce case rates. But they also show how essential it will be to reduce coronavirus transmission among children in order to fully emerge from the pandemic, experts said.

Many health officials — including Rutherford — have said that a substantial number of children will need to be vaccinated if communities are to achieve herd immunity against COVID-19.

The relatively large percentage of unvaccinated youths in Los Angeles County “is enough to sustain transmission,” Rutherford said. “And I think statewide, a lot of the increases we’re seeing are being driven numerically by cases in Los Angeles, which seem to be disproportionately falling into this age category.”

A stubbornly high level of transmission also presents the risk of spawning dangerous new variants, such as Delta, which fueled the latest wave in California.

“There’s always the potential for there to be a more devastating variant that takes hold. And we all lived through a [terrible November, December and January](#) last year,” Ferrer said during a recent briefing.

California’s coronavirus case rate is now higher than it was in a month ago, when the state was averaging about 5,500 new cases a day. Most recently, an average of about 6,300 new cases [have been reported](#) daily.

Statewide, the number of patients hospitalized with COVID-19 has plateaued over the last month, largely hovering between 3,500 and 3,800. That's significantly less than the Delta peak on Aug. 31 of nearly 8,400 people hospitalized but still substantially higher than the pre-Delta low of 915 hospitalizations on June 12.

There is still hope that some areas might avoid a terrible winter surge, and rates will remain stable or could possibly decline. "But it requires everybody in our community to really be cautious and careful," Chinsio-Kwong said.

Health officials say that, contrary to earlier in the pandemic when adults were the major spreaders of the virus, it's now known that children can be effective spreaders of the coronavirus, especially with the emergence of the [Delta variant](#).

Chinsio-Kwong said children can be infected and show no symptoms yet still transmit the virus, which can be problematic to family and friends "because you can expose everyone in your household without knowing it."

"So they do have the potential to transmit it to a grandparent who may be at higher risk or to an immunocompromised family member," she said. Gathering safely "does require everyone to get vaccinated if they are eligible," she added.

Unvaccinated people are particularly at high risk for becoming super-spreaders because when they are infected, they shed far higher amounts of virus than those who are vaccinated and suffer breakthrough infections, she said.

Unvaccinated Californians are roughly seven times more likely to contract COVID-19, 10 times likelier to end up in the hospital and 17 times more likely to die from the disease than their vaccinated counterparts, state data show.

Although children are at low risk of severe illness or death from COVID-19 compared with adults, the disease still has become a leading cause of death nationwide. For the 12-month period ending Oct. 2, [66 children ages 5 to 11](#) died from COVID-19, a number that — when compared to the leading causes of death in children in 2019 — makes the virus the eighth leading cause of death in children of this age group.

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HEADLINE	11/15 Bird flu spreads in Europe, Asia
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/norway-reports-bird-flu-farm-oie-says-2021-11-15/
GIST	<p>PARIS, Nov 15 (Reuters) - Several outbreaks of severe bird flu in Europe and Asia have been reported in recent days to the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), in a sign the virus is spreading quickly again.</p> <p>The spread of highly pathogenic avian influenza, commonly called bird flu, has put the poultry industry on alert after previous outbreaks led to the culling of tens of millions of birds. Outbreaks also often lead to trade restrictions.</p> <p>It is attracting the attention too of epidemiologists as the virus can be transmitted to humans. China has reported 21 human infections with the H5N6 subtype of avian influenza so far this year, more than in the whole of 2020.</p> <p>South Korea reported an outbreak at a farm of around 770,000 poultry in Chungcheongbuk-do, the OIE said on Monday, citing a report from the South Korean authorities. All animals were slaughtered.</p>

	<p>Also in Asia, Japan reported its first outbreak of the 2021 winter season, at a poultry farm in the northeast of the country, the OIE said, confirming a statement last week by Japan's agriculture ministry. The serotype in this outbreak was H5N8.</p> <p>In Europe, Norway reported an H5N1 bird flu outbreak in the Rogaland region in a flock of 7,000 birds, the OIE said.</p> <p>Outbreaks generally occur in the autumn, spread by migrating wild birds.</p> <p>The Belgian government put the country on increased risk for bird flu, ordering poultry to be kept indoors as of Monday, after a highly pathogenic variant of bird flu was identified in a wild goose near Antwerp.</p> <p>This followed a similar move in neighbouring France earlier this month and in the Netherlands in October.</p> <p>Bird flu cannot be transmitted through the eating of poultry products.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/14 Inflation ends when pandemic controlled?
SOURCE	https://www.newsmax.com/finance/streettalk/pandemic-inflation-covid19-joe-biden/2021/11/14/id/1044616/
GIST	<p>Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen on Sunday said that if inflation were going to end, it would depend mainly on how the pandemic goes.</p> <p>"It really depends on the pandemic," Yellen said, speaking with CBS' "Face the Nation." And "the pandemic has been calling the shots for the economy and for inflation. And if we want to get inflation down, I think continuing to make progress against the pandemic is the most important thing we can do."</p> <p>Yellen continued, acknowledging that Americans are experiencing "big increases in prices" for things like food, gas, and everyday items, according to Politico.</p> <p>"You know," Yellen added, "when the economy recovers enough from COVID, the demand patterns, people go back to eating out, traveling more, spending more on services, and the demand for products, for goods begins to go back to normal. And also, labor supply has been impacted by the pandemic. Labor force participation is down; it hasn't recovered."</p> <p>Yellen's comments come a day before President Joe Biden is expected to sign the \$1 trillion infrastructure package on Monday. According to Reuters, director of the White House National Economic Council, Brian Deese, and Yellen said they believe the infrastructure bill "as well as the \$1.75 trillion 'Build Back Better' domestic spending and climate investment bill" would "help bring down inflation."</p> <p>"There's an urgency to act," Deese said. He adds that he is confident that House Speaker Nancy Pelosi will bring the "Build Back Better" bill up for a vote next week. However, the Build Back Better bill would still need to get passed reluctant Sens. Joe Manchin, D-W.Va. and Kyrsten Sinema, D-Ariz.</p> <p>But in terms of inflation lowering due to the pandemic ending, the Biden administration is still pushing for mass vaccinations of companies with 100 or more employees.</p> <p>U.S. Surgeon General Vivek Murthy on Sunday told Fox News, that a ruling in federal courts to end the mandate "would be a setback for public health."</p> <p>"What we know very clearly is that when people get vaccinated – and the more people who get vaccinated the quicker we're able to bring this pandemic to an end — the more lives that we can ultimately save," Murthy said, according to Mass Live.</p>

	On Friday, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 5th Circuit stated in a ruling that the mandate is "a one-size-fits-all sledgehammer that makes hardly any attempt to account for differences in workplaces (and workers)."
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HEADLINE	11/15 US journalist freed from Myanmar jail
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/business-aung-san-su-kyi-middle-east-bill-richardson-myanmar-dbb813081c248f1c12bf893b2e0c1c25
GIST	<p>BANGKOK (AP) — American journalist Danny Fenster, sentenced only days ago to 11 years hard labor in Myanmar, has been freed and is on his way home, former U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. Bill Richardson said Monday.</p> <p>Richardson said in a statement that Fenster had been handed over to him in Myanmar and would return to the U.S. via Qatar over the next day and a half.</p> <p>“This is the day that you hope will come when you do this work,” Richardson said in a statement emailed from his office. “We are so grateful that Danny will finally be able to reconnect with his loved ones, who have been advocating for him all this time, against immense odds.”</p> <p>Richardson said he negotiated Fenster’s release during a recent visit to Myanmar when he held face-to-face meetings with Gen. Min Aung Hlaing, Myanmar’s military ruler.</p> <p>Fenster, the managing editor of the online magazine Frontier Myanmar, was convicted Friday of spreading false or inflammatory information, contacting illegal organizations and violating visa regulations.</p> <p>Fenster’s sentence was the harshest punishment yet among the seven journalists known to have been convicted since Myanmar’s military ousted the elected government of Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi in February.</p> <p>U.S. State Department spokesman Ned Price condemned the decision, saying in a statement that it was “an unjust conviction of an innocent person.”</p> <p>Frontier Myanmar Editor-in-Chief Thomas Kean welcomed the news of Fenster’s release, while calling for the country’s military rulers to release all journalists still behind bars.</p> <p>“Danny is one of many journalists in Myanmar who have been unjustly arrested simply for doing their job since the February coup,” he said.</p> <p>According to the United Nations, at least 126 journalists, media officials or publishers have been detained by the military since February and 47 remain in detention, including 20 charged with crimes.</p> <p>Of the seven journalists known to have been convicted, six are Myanmar nationals and four were released in a mass amnesty on Oct. 21.</p> <p>Richardson, who also served as governor of New Mexico and secretary of energy in the Clinton administration, has a record of acting as a sort of freelance diplomat.</p> <p>He is best known for traveling to nations with which Washington has poor, if any relations — such as North Korea — to obtain the freedom of detained Americans.</p> <p>Recently he has been involved in seeking freedom for U.S. citizens detained in Venezuela, another country with which Washington has strained ties.</p>

	<p>Richardson has a long history of involvement with Myanmar, starting in 1994 when as a member of U.S. Congress he met Suu Kyi at her home, where she had been under house arrest since 1989 under a previous military government.</p> <p>He last visited Myanmar in 2018 to advise on the crisis involving the country's Muslim Rohingya minority. More than 700,000 Rohingya fled to refugee camps in Bangladesh after Myanmar's military in 2017 launched a brutal crackdown.</p> <p>In an interview with The Associated Press after his most recent visit to Myanmar, Richardson had said his talks there had focused on facilitating humanitarian assistance to the country, particularly the provision of COVID-19 vaccines,</p> <p>He said his staff had been in touch with Fenster's family, and when asked if there was hope for Danny Fenster's release, he replied: "There's always hope. Don't ask any more."</p> <p>Shawn Crispin, Southeast Asia representative for the Committee to Protect Journalists, said Fenster "never should have been jailed or sentenced on bogus charges in the first place."</p> <p>"Myanmar's military regime must stop using journalists as pawns in their cynical games and release all the other reporters still languishing behind bars on spurious charges," Crispin added.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/14 California sets gas price record
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2021/11/14/energy/california-gas-prices-beat-record/index.html
GIST	<p>New York (CNN Business) California gas prices hit \$4.682 per gallon on Monday, setting a new record for the state for a second day in a row, according to the American Automobile Association.</p> <p>Monday's price for regular unleaded was six-tenths of a cent higher than the Sunday average reported by AAA, which broke the all-time record of \$4.671 previously set in October 2012.</p> <p>America's largest state by population has the highest gas prices in the country. The national average ticked up slightly to \$3.415 Monday.</p> <p>AAA said heavy rainstorms in Northern California have pinched production capacity, which then trickled down to Southern California — just what happened in Louisiana with Hurricane Ida.</p> <p>"It's a bit of a supply crunch we have right now, there's nothing major, until the refineries in Northern California can get back up to full production capacity," Jeffrey Spring, Corporate Communications Manager of the Automobile Club of Southern California, said.</p> <p>Prices are pushing \$5 in some areas, including Northern California's Humboldt County, where the average price was \$4.97 Monday. The Bay Area has surged to more than \$4.85. Doug Shupe, a spokesperson for AAA, said that although Californians are used to paying more for gas, the price has been much higher lately.</p> <p>"Drivers are paying \$1.50 more per gallon than a year ago," Shupe told CNN. "It means the person who has the typical midsize sedan with a 14 gallon size fuel tank, they're paying \$21 more to fill up that tank today than last year."</p> <p>Shupe says the primary reasons for the price spike are higher crude oil prices and pent up demand from the pandemic.</p> <p>"Typically we see prices at the pump fall off after Labor Day because people have completed their summer vacations. Kids are back in school," Shupe said. "But this year people are still traveling. There's still that demand for fuel to get to where people want to go."</p>

Gas prices have been increasing steadily throughout the year as fuel demand grows around the globe and suppliers have been [unable — or unwilling](#) — to produce more oil. Although US oil prices have surged by more than 65% this year, US oil production is about [14% below](#) the levels of the end of 2019, before Covid erupted.

Gasoline prices have [surged to seven-year highs](#), and Wall Street banks are warning that \$100 or even [\\$120 oil](#) is on its way.

Prices haven't plateaued quite yet, Spring said.

"What's happening up in the Bay Area indicates that maybe we're at the tippy top of this price increases, barring any other issues," Spring said. "So we're hoping by the end of the year that things will start heading downward."

California reached its record price in 2012 following refinery glitches that caused prices to spike for a few weeks before coming back down.

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HEADLINE	11/14 Gadhafi son: candidacy Libya president
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2021/nov/14/moammar-gadhafis-son-seif-al-islam-announces-candi/
GIST	<p>CAIRO (AP) - The son and one-time heir apparent of late Libyan dictator Moammar Gadhafi announced Sunday his candidacy for the country's presidential election next month, Libya's election agency said.</p> <p>Seif al-Islam, who is wanted by the International Criminal Court on charges of crimes against humanity related to the 2011 uprising, submitted his candidacy papers in the southern town of Sabha, 650 kilometers (400 miles) south of the capital of Tripoli, the High National Elections Commission said in a statement.</p> <p>Gadhafi's son was captured by fighters in the town of Zintan late in 2011, the year when a popular uprising, backed by NATO, toppled his father after more than 40 years in power. Moammar Gadhafi was later killed amid the ensuing fighting that would turn into a civil war.</p> <p>In a video shared by an election official, Seif al-Islam addressed the camera, saying that God will decide the right path for the country's future. He wore a traditional Libyan robe and turban and spectacles. It was the first time in years that Seif al-Islam appeared in public.</p> <p>Seif al-Islam, who was seen as the reformist face of Gadhafi's regime before the 2011 uprising, was released in June 2017 after more than five years of detention. In July he told The New York Times in an exclusive interview that he was considering a run for the country's top office. His candidacy is likely to stir controversy across the divided country.</p> <p>Seif al-Islam is wanted by the ICC on charges of crimes against humanity allegedly committed in the first weeks of the 2011 uprising.</p> <p>ICC spokesman Fadi El Abdallah declined to comment on Seif al-Islam's candidacy.</p> <p>"The Court doesn't comment on political issues, as for the legal side there is a pending warrant of arrest and that hasn't changed," he said.</p> <p>Gadhafi's son, who has deeply rooted links to tribes across Libya, is the first major presidential hopeful to submit his candidacy to run for the country's highest post. Also widely expected to announce their bids are powerful military commander Khalifa Hifter, Parliament Speaker Agila Saleh and former Interior Minister Fathi Bashaga.</p>

Return to Top	<p>The election agency began the registration process for presidential and parliamentary hopefuls last week. Potential candidates have until Nov. 22 to register to run for the country's highest post, while parliamentary hopefuls have until Dec. 7 to register their candidacies.</p> <p>Libya is set to hold presidential elections on Dec. 24, after years of U.N.-led attempts to usher in a more democratic future and bring the country's war to an end. Following the overthrow and killing of Gadhafi, oil-rich Libya spent most of the last decade spilt between rival governments - one based in the capital, Tripoli, and the other in the eastern part of the country.</p> <p>The announcement came after an international conference in Paris on Friday expressed support for holding "free, fair, inclusive and credible presidential and parliamentary elections" on Dec. 24.</p> <p>The long-awaited vote still faces challenges, including unresolved issues over election laws and occasional infighting among armed groups. Other obstacles include the deep rift that remains between the country's east and west, split for years by the war, and the presence of thousands of foreign fighters and troops.</p> <p>Gadhafi the dictator had eight children, most of whom played significant roles in his regime. His son Muatassim was killed at the same time Gadhafi was captured and slain. Two other sons, Seif al-Arab and Khamis, were killed earlier in the uprising. Another son, al-Saadi Gadhafi, was released in September after more than seven years of detention in the capital of Tripoli following his extradition from neighboring Niger.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/14 Poland border issue; seeks NATO 'steps'
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/nov/14/group-50-people-break-through-belarus-border-polish-police-say
GIST	<p>The Polish prime minister, Mateusz Morawiecki, has called for Nato to take "concrete steps" to solve the migrant crisis on Europe's border as dozens of asylum seekers reportedly broke through Poland's border defences with Belarus.</p> <p>Morawiecki said that Poland, Lithuania and Latvia may ask for consultations under article 4 of the Nato charter, indicating they believe their territorial integrity, political independence or security is threatened.</p> <p>European countries have warned that the increasingly tense situation on the frontier may lead to a conflict with Belarus, whose president, Alexander Lukashenko, has been accused of encouraging thousands of people from the Middle East to travel to Europe's borders.</p> <p>Belarus and its main backer, Russia, would probably react angrily to any new deployment of Nato troops to eastern Europe. This week Russia dispatched nuclear-capable bombers and paratroopers on training missions to Belarus as the countries tested their joint air defences.</p> <p>Lukashenko, the autocratic leader of Belarus, has also vowed to retaliate against new EU sanctions that are due to be announced on Monday.</p> <p>The sanctions are expected to target Belarusian officials, as well as travel agencies and airlines that have helped ferry migrants to Belarus. European officials have managed to strike deals with a number of airlines to limit flights with migrants to Belarus.</p> <p>The EU and Belarusian foreign policy chiefs spoke directly about the migrant crisis for the first time on Sunday.</p> <p>Josep Borrell said he had spoken to Belarus's foreign minister, Vladimir Makei, by phone about "the precarious humanitarian situation" at the Belarus-Poland border.</p>

“The current situation is unacceptable and must stop. People should not be used as weapons,” Borrell said in a tweet.

In Belarus’s statement about the conversation, Makei said any sanctions would be “hopeless” and “counterproductive”.

On Saturday, the Syrian carrier Cham Wings Airlines said it would halt flights to Minsk “due to the difficult situation on the Belarus-Poland border and because most of the travellers on our flights to Minsk are Syrian citizens”. Turkey has also blocked flights for migrants from Istanbul.

The turmoil on the border has continued, however. Polish police reported that there were 223 attempts to cross the border from Belarus on Saturday and that one group of 50 people broke through defences on Poland’s border near the village of Starzyna. They were later caught by Polish authorities and returned to the border, the state news agency PAP reported.

The police also said the helmet of an officer serving at the border had been damaged after a stone was thrown at him.

The spokesperson for Poland’s security services, Stanisław Żaryn, wrote on Twitter on Sunday about reports of trucks carrying stones and rubble from Belarusian construction companies to areas near the border.

Aid agencies have warned of a growing humanitarian crisis as thousands of asylum seekers, many from Iraq and Syria, stay at campsites on the border with temperatures plunging below freezing.

Two diplomats said on Thursday that the EU was considering imposing sanctions on Belarus’s main airport in an attempt to make it more difficult for airlines to bring in migrants.

“We will give the green light to extending the legal framework of our sanctions against Belarus so that it can be applied to everyone who participates in smuggling migrants to this country,” Borrell told the French weekend newspaper Le Journal du Dimanche.

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HEADLINE	11/14 Covid cases climb: North, West
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/covid-19-cases-rise-in-pockets-of-north-and-west-halting-delta-variants-decline-in-u-s-11636898401?mod=hp_lead_pos1
GIST	<p>Covid-19 cases are climbing in places like the upper Midwest, Southwest and parts of the Northeast, hindering the nation’s progress in ending a surge triggered by the highly contagious Delta variant of the coronavirus.</p> <p>Nationally, the seven-day average of new cases appears to be edging back up after hovering just above 70,000 for several weeks, according to data from Johns Hopkins University, halting what had been a decline from the Delta-fueled peak that began in September. While the Southeast cools off from its summer surge, other regions are under pressure, including places where colder weather has brought people back indoors where the virus can more easily spread.</p> <p>The stalled progress is an unwelcome turn as the Thanksgiving holiday nears, which will mean more people traveling and congregating indoors, as families gather to celebrate.</p> <p>“Right now we find ourselves in a really truly alarming spike in cases,” Jan Malcolm, commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Health, said at a briefing last week.</p> <p>Minnesota has recently averaged more than 3,500 new cases a day, according to Johns Hopkins, the state’s highest level since last April. After a brief summertime lull, when the state reported only about two new</p>

Covid-19 deaths a day, the seven-day average is about 24 a day. The state recently topped 9,000 deaths since the pandemic began, according to Johns Hopkins.

The latest surge has begun overwhelming some hospitals. Gov. Tim Walz set up two temporary sites staffed by National Guard members and federal nurses to relieve hospitals caring for Covid patients.

States widely report the bulk of Covid-19 hospitalizations remain among unvaccinated or partially vaccinated patients, even as some states show fully vaccinated people have become a rising share of the mix.

The virus is spreading in other cold-weather places like Michigan and New England, including Vermont. Cases also are heating up in some Southwestern states like Arizona, which has recently averaged more than 3,000 new cases a day.

“After nearly two years, I don’t blame anyone for feeling done with the Covid-19 pandemic,” Don Herrington, interim director of the Arizona Department of Health Services, wrote in a blog post last week. “The unfortunate truth, however, is the pandemic isn’t done with us.”

The problem is mainly the still-unvaccinated population in the U.S., and waning immunity among people who got vaccine shots early on and now should get boosters, said Eric Topol, director of the Scripps Research Translational Institute in La Jolla, Calif.

Roughly 59% of the whole U.S. population is fully vaccinated, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, meaning they have received two doses of an mRNA vaccine or the single-dose Johnson & Johnson shot. And about one-third of people aged 65 and up have had a booster shot, CDC data show.

“We still have a huge number of people unvaccinated,” Dr. Topol said. “That’s by far the driving factor.”

The Delta-fueled surge that began over the summer appeared to peak in early September, when the nation averaged more than 160,000 new cases a day. The cool-off in the South helped relieve some pressure, likely due in part to the surge in infections also building up more immunity in the population, health experts say.

The price was heavy. The U.S. reported more than 150,000 Covid-19 deaths over the past four months, bringing the pandemic total of known Covid-19 deaths to more than 760,000.

The decline in new daily cases stalled in late October, when the U.S. average fell to near the 70,000 mark, Johns Hopkins data show; by Friday that average was closer to 80,000. In June, the average had briefly slipped below 12,000 new daily cases.

Meanwhile, the recent decline in new hospital admissions has also halted as numbers start rising again, federal data show. And the U.S. continues to average more than 1,000 newly reported Covid-19 deaths a day, Johns Hopkins data show.

Health authorities say the Delta variant is easily finding pockets of still-unvaccinated people, even in some of the most-vaccinated places, like Vermont, where about 72% of the population is fully inoculated.

“The high number of cases continues to be dominated by those who are unvaccinated,” Vermont Gov. Phil Scott said last week.

Mr. Scott said the surge is putting pressure on hospitals that are already under strain from patients seeking care for other reasons, including catching up on delayed care from earlier in the pandemic. Elsewhere in the region, Maine, which has been battling a persistent Delta-fueled surge, reported a record 248 Covid-19 patients in hospitals on Friday.

	<p>Some states, like Michigan, report that fully vaccinated people are increasingly adding to their Covid-19 numbers—reflecting both the rising number of vaccinated people and the vaccines’ waning effectiveness among people who got the shots early on. The numbers highlight the need for boosters, public-health experts say.</p> <p>“As the fully vaccinated population has increased, so have the percent of breakthrough incidents; but breakthrough burden remains lower,” a recent Michigan report said.</p> <p>Dr. Natasha Bagdasarian, chief medical executive in the state, said the rise in cases among 5- to 18-year-olds, particularly at schools that reopened this fall without masking protocols in place, has been a major contributor to the state’s overall surge. The recent rollout of vaccine shots for children ages 5 to 11 could help.</p> <p>“What I am fearful of is that colder weather is coming,” Dr. Bagdasarian said. “People are gathering more indoors. The holidays are coming. And on top of that we have viral respiratory season right around the corner.”</p>
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HEADLINE	11/14 Body Seattle deputy fire chief found
SOURCE	https://mynorthwest.com/3237539/body-seattle-deputy-fire-chief-found-mountains/
GIST	<p>The Kittitas County Sheriff’s Office confirmed Sunday that the body of Seattle Deputy Fire Chief Jay Schreckengost was found near Cliffdell in unincorporated Yakima County.</p> <p>The sheriff’s office said there was “no preliminary evidence of suspicious activity or foul play.”</p> <p>Schreckengost left on Tuesday, Nov. 2 to scout for elk. Law enforcement say his body was discovered about a half mile from where his pickup truck was parked the day he left.</p> <p>The sheriff’s office notified Schreckengost’s family and the Seattle Fire Department that he had been found. His family and members of the Seattle Fire Department escorted Schreckengost to Johnston and Williams funeral home in Ellensburg with a coroner.</p> <p>“We’re saddened to give news of Chief Schreckengost’s passing to his family and fellow firefighters, and we ask the public and press to respect their privacy as they grieve his loss,” said Kittitas County Sheriff Clay Myers. “We also want to thank everyone who participated in or supported this search. It was a tremendous outpouring of resources and effort that produced a vital result: a family knows what happened to their loved one and he can be brought home to them.”</p> <p>Seattle Fire also released a statement Sunday evening. In part:</p> <p>“This evening, we learned that Seattle Fire Deputy Chief Jay Schreckengost was found deceased in the Cliffdell area where the search has been focused. We are incredibly saddened by this news and are all grieving the loss of one of our own. Deputy Chief Schreckengost was a husband, father and friend to all, and our hearts are with his family right now who have been at the site every day searching alongside search and rescue, fire and law enforcement agencies.”</p>
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HEADLINE	11/14 Gov. prods, orders thru public health crisis
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/politics/inslee-prods-and-orders-amid-latest-covid-19-pandemic-surge-we-can-get-on-top-of-this-virus/
GIST	<p>On July 1, Gov. Jay Inslee hoisted the “Washington Ready” flag above Seattle’s Space Needle to celebrate the end of more than a year of the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions on business.</p> <p>Within five weeks, Washington’s daily confirmed caseload had increased nearly tenfold, as the new and ultra-contagious delta variant ripped across the state.</p>

Thus ensued the latest complications as Inslee and state officials soldiered through the peak of Washington's pandemic for cases, [hospitalizations](#) and deaths.

As he has at every stage of the now 21-month-long public health crisis, Inslee responded with strong emergency measures to tamp down on the virus. The blowback of protests across the state evoked the tensions of 2020, as state workers threatened to quit.

On two days in August, he reimposed a mask order and ordered perhaps the strictest vaccine mandate in the nation for hundreds of thousands of state and school workers and health care employees.

And now nearly 92% of 63,000 state workers subject to the mandate are verified as vaccinated.

In a recent interview in his office at the Capitol, Inslee pointed to that figure as well as Washington's death rate, which throughout the pandemic has continued to register among the lowest in the nation, as signs his orders are effective.

Meanwhile, Washington residents are among the most vaccinated in the nation, [according to the Mayo Clinic](#).

"One medical miracle, one common-sense piece of cloth, and in combination they can be very effective," the governor told The Seattle Times.

But the measures took a toll. Nearly 1,800 state workers [have since been dismissed or left their jobs](#) for not complying with the mandate, a number expected to inch up further in the coming weeks.

Vaccine hesitancy combined with misinformation and outrage over a fresh round of government mandates sparked a [new wave of protests at the Capitol](#) and across the state, including disruptions at county buildings and school board meetings.

For conservatives opposed to the mandates to curb the virus, the orders renewed angers spurred during last year's lockdowns, and brought further criticisms of Inslee's 600-plus days of emergency orders.

"We're creating bitterness that will last, and to get just a relatively small number of new people vaccinated," said state House Republican Leader J.T. Wilcox, who is vaccinated and has encouraged others to get their shots. "Was that worth it?"

The summer surge has since dampened, but not before showing the limits of government's ability to save lives.

Many counties outside the Puget Sound area saw their hospitalizations and deaths surge, even as King County — home to a third of the state's population — experienced much milder increases.

In a reversal from last year, counties across the state — from Cowlitz and Lewis, to Grays Harbor, Lincoln, Ferry and Stevens counties — [now have higher death rates per 100,000 than King](#).

Now, Inslee and state health officials are considering new rounds of measures, such as possible requirements for private businesses and a COVID vaccine requirement for children to be in school.

"We haven't made decisions in or out, for the policies," Inslee said. "But there is one clear thing that we know. We can get on top of this virus by getting vaccinated."

'This isn't about politics'

An overwhelming majority of those subject to the vaccine mandates by Inslee — and by Seattle Mayor Jenny Durkan and King County Executive Dow Constantine — have complied.

Nearly 92% of state workers subject to Inslee's mandate are verified as vaccinated, with an additional 3% having gotten accommodations to keep them in a role away from the public. About 3% of the roughly 63,000 workers lost their jobs due to the mandate, and the fates of an additional 2% are still waiting to be determined.

In both King County and Seattle, more than 94% of government employees subject to the mandate are vaccinated as of last week.

They include people like Julie Schick, 68, who works for the city's drainage and wastewater department. She was vaccinated last spring. But the mandate brought relief. It meant, she said, a less nervy commute when she rides the bus to work.

She sees those who decline vaccination as, essentially, selfish.

"People just really need to stop navel gazing, this isn't about you, you are just a small piece of the puzzle," Schick said. "People need to realize this is a community effort; this is a worldwide effort; this isn't about politics; this is about public health."

Andrea Gallagher, 51, a fiscal specialist at the University of Washington, Tacoma, said she'd initially tried to consider the perspectives of people who won't get vaccinated. But as the pandemic has worn on, she's lost patience.

"I'm not listening anymore," Gallagher said. "We're almost two years in now, and I just see not vaccinating and not respecting mandates as, they're just incubators for different variants and I just don't see us getting out of this."

She sees an irony in the public demonstrations from some law enforcement — posting video clips of final sign offs, [delivering boots to City Hall](#) — who refuse to comply with the vaccination mandate.

"Aren't police officers always telling people of color if they'd just comply, things wouldn't happen at the hands of police?" Gallagher said.

Overall, however, the level of compliance among public workers, and law enforcement in particular, is surprisingly high, said Jake Grumbach, an assistant professor of political science at UW.

Despite high-profile refusals, 93% of Seattle police employees and 97% of State Patrol employees are vaccinated.

For a small minority of state employees, the mandates have engendered deep mistrust and hard feelings. They liken the policies to some of the most hateful government policies of the 20th century.

Dana Swift, a design engineer at UW, says the mandate is a "Gestapo-like" tactic, invoking the Nazi secret police.

Swift, 62, is vaccinated but is retiring because of his objection to the mandate and to UW's broader COVID restrictions.

"The government is doing things that they ought not to do," Swift said. "The penalty that one incurs by being forced to be vaccinated, the loss of liberty, the weight of that is greater than and is a worse outcome than the risk to someone else from being unvaccinated."

The government has mandated various vaccines for more than two centuries. The Supreme Court has blessed the practice for more than a century.

Every U.S. state requires certain vaccinations for kids to attend public school, although exemptions vary by state.

Washington [requires children to get 16 shots](#) to immunize them against nine diseases before they can enter kindergarten.

People who are vaccinated against COVID can still be hospitalized and die. But the unvaccinated make up the [overwhelming majority of hospitalizations and deaths](#) in Washington.

“The presence of those mandates, having kids have to be immunized before they go to school has really done wonders,” said Robert Bednarczyk, assistant professor of global health and epidemiology at Emory University’s school of public health. “States have the duty and the responsibility to keep their populations healthy and that’s what they’re really doing here.”

But to Paulene Dougherty, who lost her state job after 18 years working in juvenile rehabilitation, the mandate had the opposite of its intended effect.

She said she’d been hesitant to get vaccinated, had questions and was “waiting and doing research.” She says the mandate is “against the Nuremberg Code,” the post World War II principles guiding medical research.

The Food and Drug Administration [has given full approval](#) to the Pfizer vaccine, marketed as Comirnaty. But she says, incorrectly, that another vaccine is [being substituted for it in the U.S.](#)

“The more it was pushed, the more suspicious I got, and then when it was forced then I really got suspicious,” Dougherty, 62, of Yakima, said. Now she says the “government was up to something” and had “nefarious intent.”

She’s now looking for a new job and considering going out of state.

More orders possible

After more than a year of evolving restrictions on businesses and social activities, [Inslee celebrated the end of those measures with a mini-tour](#), raising the celebration flag, and stopping in Tacoma, Spokane and Seattle.

“It felt like we were entering a more hopeful phase,” said Jamila Thomas, Inslee’s chief of staff. Within weeks, the Delta variant began spreading in Washington, sending cases back up, and the mood changed. “It was a gut-punch,” said Thomas.

As Inslee and his staff considered their response, Thomas recounted hesitation about bringing back a statewide mask order, [which the governor ultimately reimposed](#) in mid-August.

During the spring, the ability [for vaccinated Washingtonians to do away with masks](#) had been a key incentive for people to get vaccinated in the first place, said Thomas, adding, “It was really tough to reimpose that.”

Debates about how far a vaccine mandate should go included questions on how strict it should be. And whether to consider routinely testing employees instead of requiring vaccinations was worth the \$66 million annual estimated cost, she said.

“Untenable and again, it doesn’t stop the virus,” said Thomas, referring to the costs of testing. Nonetheless, putting in place such a strict mandate for state workers, she said, “There was no certainty of how many would hang with us.”

In Washington, 8,857 people have died of COVID, [according to the state Department of Health](#). The seven-day average of daily deaths peaked in late August and early September at 43 per day, and has since declined.

Senate Majority Leader Andy Billig, D-Spokane, praised Inslee's handling of the latest surge, noting that Washington has seen both fewer deaths and a more resilient economy than most of other states.

"And so while there has been a lot of loss in Washington, there's been a lot of heartache, a lot of challenge ... when you compare it to other states, I think our state's done very well," said Billig. "The governor deserves a lot of that credit."

By early November, about 5,000 Washingtonians daily were still getting their first shot, according to Inslee. That figure could well increase for a time, now that children between 5 and 11 years old [are beginning to get the vaccines](#).

In his quest to get Washingtonians vaccinated, Inslee and health officials are considering additional vaccine orders.

One such idea could come atop the mandates by President Joe Biden that [companies with 100 or more employees require COVID shots](#) beginning in January, or as an alternative, be tested on a weekly basis. The governor could potentially use his emergency powers to strengthen that requirement.

In a statement, Kris Johnson, of the Association of Washington Business, said he hoped Inslee doesn't go farther than the Biden mandate.

"We hope that our state's leaders consider Washington's high vaccination rate and do not elect to go beyond the federal government's requirement by expanding the requirement to smaller businesses or removing the option for testing," Johnson wrote in prepared remarks. "Employers need every tool available to attract and retain their workforce."

Meanwhile, the Washington state Board of Health has convened a task force to explore whether COVID vaccination should be required for school attendance.

The board voted unanimously in mid-October to convene a technical advisory group to explore the question. The board would make that decision based on a range of criteria, [according to meeting minutes](#), including effectiveness of the vaccine, disease burden and implementation.

The governor said he hasn't yet made up his mind on either set of policies.

Biden's vaccine order "is something we're going to be watching very closely, to see if it has the desired effect," Inslee said. Meanwhile, "We are going to watch closely the uptick rate in our schools."

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HEADLINE	11/14 'Ghost guns' bought online fuel violence
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/14/us/ghost-guns-homemade-firearms.html
GIST	<p>CHULA VISTA, Calif. — Max Mendoza's parents awakened just after dawn to the echoing clap-pop of a gunshot, and ran from their bedroom to find their 12-year-old son propped against the couch, eyes wide in pain, terror and surprise.</p> <p>"It's the real one. It's the real one," Max whispered, clutching his chest, seemingly astounded that a weapon resembling a toy, a cheap-looking brown-and-black pistol, could end his life in an instant.</p> <p>But it did. Investigators in this city just south of San Diego are still trying to determine exactly what happened on that Saturday morning in July — if the seventh-grader accidentally shot himself, or if his 15-year-old friend, who the police say had brought the weapon into the apartment, discharged it while showing it off.</p> <p>What is certain is the kind of weapon that killed Max. It was a "ghost gun."</p>

Ghost guns — untraceable firearms without serial numbers, assembled from components bought online — are increasingly becoming the lethal weapon of easy access for those legally barred from buying or owning guns around the country. The criminal underground has long relied on stolen weapons with sanded-off serial numbers, but ghost guns represent a digital-age upgrade, and they are especially prevalent in coastal blue states with strict firearm laws.

Nowhere is that truer than in California, where their proliferation has reached epidemic proportions, according to local and federal law enforcement officials in Los Angeles, Oakland, San Diego and San Francisco. Over the past 18 months, the officials said, ghost guns accounted for 25 to 50 percent of firearms recovered at crime scenes. The vast majority of suspects caught with them were legally prohibited from having guns.

“I’ve been on the force for 30 years next month, and I’ve never seen anything like this,” said Lt. Paul Phillips of the San Diego Police Department, who this year organized the force’s first unit dedicated to homemade firearms. By the beginning of October, he said, the department had recovered almost 400 ghost guns, about double the total for all of 2020 with nearly three months to go in the year.

Law enforcement officials are not exactly sure why their use is taking off. But they believe it is basically a matter of a new, disruptive technology gradually gaining traction in a market, then rocketing up when buyers catch on. This isn’t just happening on the West Coast. Since January 2016, about 25,000 privately made firearms have been confiscated by local and federal law enforcement agencies nationwide.

Ghost guns, and the niche industry that produces them, have flourished because of a loophole in federal regulation: The parts used to build “privately made firearms” are classified as components, not actual guns, which means that online buyers are not required to undergo background checks or register the weapons. That makes them a powerful magnet for those banned from gun ownership, including convicted felons, domestic abusers subject to orders of protection, the mentally ill and children, like the teenager who brought his gun into Max Mendoza’s apartment, according to the police.

Closing that loophole is the focus of new regulations ordered by President Biden — the most prominent surviving plank of his [effort to combat gun violence](#), announced after a string of mass shootings this year. The rules would essentially treat ghost guns as traditional firearms — requiring core components to be engraved with serial numbers, imposing background checks and requiring online purchasers to pick up their orders at federally licensed gun shops.

Law enforcement officials in California think that the rules would do much to keep ghost guns out of the hands of criminals and children. “It’s definitely going to stop some of the most obvious problems,” said the Los Angeles city attorney, Mike Feuer, [who is suing a](#) leading gun-parts vendor.

But the new rules, which are likely to be challenged in court by gun rights groups, are not expected to be implemented until early next year, after a lengthy public comment process. And gun control groups have raised doubts about the robustness of enforcement by federal firearms regulators.

What’s more, while the rules would create a set of legal roadblocks, law enforcement officials say the extralegal pipeline for parts is sure to adapt and thrive. There is a huge surfeit of supplies in circulation, enough to supply dealers who sell pre-assembled guns, via social media platforms or the dark web, for years. At the same time, the increasing availability of 3-D printers, which can create the plastic and metal components of guns, has opened a new backdoor source of illegal weapons for gangs and drug dealers who would otherwise have to steal them.

“This isn’t going away,” Mr. Feuer said.

Ghost guns have been used in two recent shootings of police officers in California — the June 2020 killing of two officers in the Bay Area [by a far-right extremist](#), according to prosecutors, and the [grievous wounding](#) of two Los Angeles County deputies as they sat in their patrol car last September. Other ghost

gun shootings have appeared to be terrifyingly random, like the killing of a hotel parking attendant in downtown San Diego last spring by a man, the police say, who was already wanted on weapons charges.

But the epidemic seems to be disproportionately affecting young people, as purchasers, perpetrators and victims. Two years ago, a 16-year-old student walked into Saugus High School, north of Los Angeles, and [killed two teenagers](#) with a .45-caliber semiautomatic pistol assembled from a kit before turning the weapon on himself — a case that, more than any other, elevated the issue to national attention.

Max Mendoza's death, by contrast, flickered on the local TV news in San Diego for a weekend. His parents, Aida Mendoza and William Tagle, returned home after the news vans had driven away and the police had scoured the apartment for other weapons.

All they found was Max's broken BB gun. He had hidden it, Mr. Tagle said, because he was not allowed to bring violent toys into the home.

A Deadly Loophole

The decades-long debate over gun control in Washington revolves around the regulation of traditional firearms. Ghost guns pose a more elemental question: What makes a gun a gun?

Every semiautomatic weapon consists of two main parts: the movable upper "slide," which sits on the barrel, and the "receiver" or "frame" — the lower part to which almost everything else, including the trigger and magazine, can be attached and made functional after drilling a few holes and filing a groove into an unfinished, factory-produced frame.

Under federal law, any frame or receiver considered 80 percent finished is a functional firearm subject to the same regulations as a fully assembled gun. If it is less than 80 percent finished, it is not subject to the same federal safeguards.

Even so, an experienced amateur can make the minor modifications needed to turn it into a working firearm in less than an hour.

The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives judges each component on a case-by-case basis, using specific, if subjective, technical standards, [illustrated with annotated photographs on the agency's website](#). But critics have long accused the agency — [hobbled and hamstrung](#) by the gun lobby — of failing to aggressively investigate companies that sell kits with everything necessary to quickly assemble a ghost gun.

"I think a lot of us thought this was a problem that we had 10 years to deal with, when it was, in reality, more like two," said David Chipman, a former A.T.F. agent who was withdrawn as Mr. Biden's nominee to head the bureau in September amid fierce opposition from the gun lobby.

"This is the biggest threat in the country right now," said John Feinblatt, president of Everytown for Gun Safety, a gun control group that has tracked the rapid growth of the gun kit industry — from 26 online retailers in 2014 [to about 80 last year](#).

The A.T.F.'s acting deputy director, Thomas Chittum, said that while the agency took the issue seriously, ghost guns represented a tricky regulatory challenge, because "the law does not draw a bright line around the definition of what a firearm is."

Mr. Chipman had pledged to make the issue a priority, and his failed nomination has left gun control advocates wondering how energetically the agency will enforce the new regulations. Indeed, many A.T.F. employees own firearms, and several staff members, speaking on the condition of anonymity, feared the rule could infringe on the Second Amendment rights of hobbyists, who have not been required to register homemade guns unless they intend to sell them.

Nonetheless, the A.T.F. has worked on dozens of ghost-gun busts with local police departments, and has recently cracked down on Polymer80, the Nevada-based industry leader whose weapons accounted for the majority of ghost guns found at California crime scenes in 2019.

The company sells a wide range of components online, including kits to build AR-15-type semiautomatic rifles. But the A.T.F. focused on one of its most popular: the \$590 “Buy, Build and Shoot” kit that contained almost everything needed to make a functional Glock-style pistol.

Last December, the A.T.F. raided the company’s headquarters near Reno, citing a failure by the company to submit the kits for regulatory approval. The application for the search warrant included an affidavit from an informant who assembled one of the company’s kits in 21 minutes.

Polymer80’s lawyer and a company representative did not respond to questions. At the time of the raid, a representative said the business had complied with federal law.

The raid has not yet resulted in charges. But the company has stopped selling the kits, which was the main intention of the action, according to two federal officials with knowledge of the case.

Crimes and Pastimes

Steven R. Ely, a 69-year-old retired high school teacher, had never really heard about ghost guns until he was almost killed by one.

A little after 10 p.m. on April 24, he rounded a corner in San Diego’s bustling Gaslamp Quarter, heard four or five loud claps and felt something plink against his right side, like a fleck of gravel.

Mr. Ely stuck a hand inside his shirt, reassured, momentarily, to find no blood. Then he looked again and saw a tiny, spreading patch of red. His knees gave way. He would spend weeks in the hospital, losing 40 pounds and much of his sunny confidence that he would enjoy an active retirement, on a surfboard, into his 80s or 90s.

“I never saw the guy who shot me,” Mr. Ely said. He had just retired, was enjoying a great life, he said, “and this happens.”

Mr. Ely was among the victims of a flash of carnage that began, investigators say, when a man named Travis Sarreshteh, 32, walked up to a hotel parking attendant, Justice Boldin, and, without warning, shot him with a Polymer80 pistol. Mr. Boldin, 28, a former college baseball player, died almost instantly.

Then Mr. Sarreshteh, who pleaded not guilty after being charged with murder, brushed shoulders with a group of friends from New Jersey. He wheeled and fired, slightly wounding two of the men, the police say. A third man, Vincent Gazzani, was injured in the arm, lung, spleen and stomach. Mr. Ely was probably hit by that volley.

“I was sure I was going to die — I couldn’t catch my breath,” said Mr. Gazzani, who was saved by a former Israeli Army medic who applied a field dressing from a napkin, assuring him he was “going to make it” as he waited for paramedics to arrive.

The police are still not sure how Mr. Sarreshteh may have gotten the weapon, a recurring theme in almost all ghost gun investigations. But obtaining a ghost gun, they say, allowed him to dodge a background check that would have revealed a significant criminal history, including a 2017 illegal weapons charge.

The shooting brought barely a ripple nationally. But it galvanized officials in San Diego.

“How could somebody who was barred from lawfully purchasing a firearm get a 9-millimeter gun and shoot five people in the middle of the street?” said Marni von Wilpert, a San Diego city councilwoman who pushed through a law banning guns without serial numbers, part of a wave of local legislation addressing the crisis.

Community leaders in some of the state's violence-plagued urban neighborhoods have been sounding the alarm for the last couple of years, as teenagers snap up homemade guns for protection, or as emblems of toughness.

"People aren't buying regular guns anymore," said Antoine Towers, who works for an anti-violence program in Oakland. "Almost all the youngsters are using ghosts."

Brian Muhammad, who works with at-risk young people in Stockton, said he recently asked a group of teenagers where they got their guns. "Did you drive to Vegas?" he asked, referring to Nevada's looser gun laws. They looked at him as if he were crazy.

"Who would do that?" one of them replied. "You order them in pieces using your phone."

In Oakland, a 17-year-old boy recently decided to arm himself after falling out with a friend who had a gun. He matter-of-factly described the process of assembling a ghost gun, munching on potato chips during an interview in his living room.

For weeks, the boy, whose name is being withheld at his family's request, surfed websites and collected about \$750 in parts from online retailers and private sellers. After some trial and error (one part did not fit the gun's lower section), he built a working imitation Glock using how-to videos.

He said he also had guidance from several friends — who had built guns as "a good way to pass the time when you're stuck at home" during the pandemic.

A Flooded Market

Early last year, Bryan Muehlberger, who lives north of Los Angeles, wanted to prove just how easily a minor could buy a gun kit online.

He ordered it using the name of his teenage daughter, Gracie, checking the boxes indicating that she was a legal buyer. The company (which he does not want to identify because it has his family's personal information) processed the order without bothering to ensure that Gracie was over 21, as state law requires.

"I get a box in the mail, and it says 'Gracie Muehlberger' right there on the label," he said in an interview, pausing to collect himself. "I was dumbstruck."

Gracie Muehlberger is dead. She was killed by a ghost gun, at age 15, along with 14-year-old Dominic Blackwell, in the Saugus High School shooting.

Biden administration officials believe the new ghost gun regulations will put an end to the sale of similar kits, at least legally.

The country's two most influential gun rights groups, the National Rifle Association and the National Shooting Sports Foundation, have sharply criticized the rules, but have not campaigned heavily against them. Larry Keane, a top N.S.S.F. official, said he had "important concerns" that the regulations would hamper "lawful business activities," and would not rule out legal action in the future.

Justice Department lawyers are more concerned, however, that harder-line groups will challenge the rules in federal court, arguing that only Congress, not the A.T.F., has the right to change the definition of a firearm.

In recent months, the Firearms Policy Coalition, a California-based nonprofit that opposes most gun regulations, sued to block ghost gun laws in several states, [including Delaware](#), arguing that the rules violated the Second Amendment rights of Americans to "personally manufacture" guns for "self-defense in the home."

Most of the law enforcement officers interviewed for this article were only vaguely aware of these regulatory shifts. Demand for ghost guns will remain high because obtaining a gun online, even illegally, is less risky than stealing one, they said.

Lt. Derrick J. Lew of the San Francisco Police Department believes criminals will shift to shadier avenues of supply, given the growing popularity of 3-D printing.

The market has become so competitive, he added, that kitchen-table vendors have begun offering add-ons like silencers and a device to make handguns fire at a faster rate. Money-back guarantees are also becoming more common.

The San Diego police are beginning to uncover larger operations, often connected to the drug trade. “You are starting to see people manufacturing on a much bigger scale — 20, 30 guns at a time,” said a sergeant in the gun unit, speaking on the condition of anonymity because he works undercover.

Profit is the main driver. Dealers buy \$600 worth of parts, put them together, then sell guns for as much as \$1,400. Customers are happy to pay a premium for an untraceable weapon, he said.

Ghost guns have a spectral anonymity, providing scant ballistic value to investigators. But there is one thing that sets them apart.

Though the bullets found in bodies and walls are unremarkable, detectives have noticed a telltale trait in the casings: The marks left by ghost guns’ firing pins are cruder than the imprints made by standard ones. They look a bit like police badges.

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HEADLINE	11/14 NYC workers suspended: fake vax cards
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/11/14/world/covid-vaccine-boosters-mandate?type=stylIn-live-updates&label=coronavirus%20updates&index=0#sanitation-workers-fake-vaccine-cards
GIST	<p>Several dozen New York City workers have been suspended without pay as a part of an investigation into the use of fake vaccine cards at the Department of Sanitation, a city official with knowledge of the investigation said.</p> <p>The investigation will include a thorough review of vaccination records to determine how widespread the fraud might be, said the official, who was not authorized to comment on the investigation and spoke on the condition of anonymity. The development is the latest in a protracted debate over the city’s vaccine mandate for municipal workers.</p> <p>The mandate took effect on Nov. 1, and roughly 9,000 city workers who had not received the shot were placed on unpaid leave, with thousands more applying for exemptions on medical or religious grounds. In the past month, vaccination rates have risen across city agencies, particularly in places like the Fire and Police Departments where opposition to the mandate had taken a strong hold.</p> <p>The Department of Sanitation garnered particular attention for a single-day increase of nine percentage points — taking its ranks to 76 percent vaccinated from 67 percent almost overnight, according to City Hall.</p> <p>“Very encouraging progress,” Mitch Schwartz, a spokesman for Mayor Bill de Blasio, tweeted on Oct. 29. The possibility that some of those vaccinations might have been fraudulent has shaken the department. A vast majority of the roughly 10,000 sanitation workers — over 87 percent — have received at least one shot, according to a city spokesman.</p>

	<p>“These are very concerning allegations, and we take them very seriously,” Vincent Gragnani, press secretary for the sanitation department, said on Sunday. “Getting vaccinated is important to public health, and we do not tolerate anyone faking something that is a requirement of city employment.”</p> <p>He confirmed that the department was “actively investigating this situation,” in coordination with the city’s Department of Investigation.</p> <p>The investigation department said that it was “aware of allegations involving the issuance of bogus vaccination cards” and declined further comment.</p> <p>The allegations were first reported in The New York Post on Saturday. It remains to be seen if criminal charges will be pursued. New Yorkers have been criminally charged for creating or using fake vaccine cards.</p> <p>Harry Nespoli, president of the Teamsters Local 831 union representing sanitation workers, said that the investigation was still in its early stages, and he was not yet sure how many workers might be involved. “It could be 50, it could be 15,” he said. “Everything has to be proven.”</p> <p>Mr. Nespoli has been a critic of the mandate, arguing instead for a testing option. He said that while the union disavowed any falsification of records, it would defend its members.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/14 Austria lockdown: unvaccinated in homes
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/11/14/world/covid-vaccine-boosters-mandate?type=styl-live-updates&label=coronavirus%20updates&index=0#austria-unvaccinated-lockdown
GIST	<p>Austria will confine unvaccinated adults and minors over age 11 to their homes as part of a targeted lockdown, lawmakers announced Sunday.</p> <p>The move, which is aimed at calming the worst surge in infections the country has faced since the pandemic started, is believed to be one of the first national lockdowns directed at the unvaccinated.</p> <p>“We do not take this step lightly,” Chancellor Alexander Schallenberg said at a news conference on Sunday.</p> <p>Starting Monday, those who cannot prove that they are either fully vaccinated or immune from a past infection can only leave their dwellings for essential reasons, such as going to the doctor or for essential grocery shopping.</p> <p>Karl Nehammer, the country’s interior minister, announced wide-ranging police measures, such as checking vaccination records, and laid out some of the fines people would face if caught breaking the rules.</p> <p>Austria is currently averaging 10,395 cases a day, according to the Center for Systems Science and Engineering at Johns Hopkins University. Less than 65 percent of the country is fully vaccinated, one of the lowest rates in the European Union.</p> <p>The new lockdown, which comes a week after an announcement that most businesses were required to check customers for proof of vaccination or immunity, essentially aims to keep the estimated two million unvaccinated Austrians off the streets as cases are surging.</p> <p>Outside the chancellery in Vienna on Sunday, where Mr. Schallenberg, his interior and health minister were announcing the new restrictions, a crowd gathered to protest them.</p> <p>The country’s Parliament is coming together Sunday afternoon to approve the rules, but the vote is a formality because the governing parties support it and have the votes to pass it.</p>

	Several lawmakers had called for a general lockdown to bring down the numbers, but the country's health minister pointed out on Sunday that while the overall infections were going up, the infections among the immunized were actually decreasing.
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HEADLINE	11/14 Crunch at ports means crisis for farmers
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/14/business/economy/farm-exports-supply-chain-ports.html
GIST	<p>It's just 60 miles from El Dorado Dairy in Ontario, Calif., to the nation's largest container port in Los Angeles. But the farm is having little luck getting its products onto a ship headed for the foreign markets that are crucial to its business.</p> <p>The farm is part of one of the nation's largest cooperatives, California Dairies Inc., which manufactures milk powder for factories in Southeast Asia and Mexico that use it to make candy, baby formula and other foods. The company typically ships 50 million pounds of its milk powder and butter out of ports each month. But roughly 60 percent of the company's bookings on outbound vessels have been canceled or deferred in recent months, resulting in about \$45 million in missed revenue per month.</p> <p>"This is not just a problem, it's not just an inconvenience, it's catastrophic," said Brad Anderson, the chief executive of California Dairies.</p> <p>A supply chain crisis for imports has grabbed national headlines and attracted the attention of the Biden administration, as shoppers fret about securing gifts in time for the holidays and as strong consumer demand for couches, electronics, toys and clothing pushes inflation to its highest level in three decades.</p> <p>Yet another crisis is also unfolding for American farm exports.</p> <p>The same congestion at U.S. ports and shortage of truck drivers that have brought the flow of some goods to a halt have also left farmers struggling to get their cargo abroad and fulfill contracts before food supplies go bad. Ships now take weeks, rather than days, to unload at the ports, and backed-up shippers are so desperate to return to Asia to pick up more goods that they often leave the United States with empty containers rather than wait for American farmers to fill them up.</p> <p>The National Milk Producers Federation estimates that shipping disruptions have cost the U.S. dairy industry nearly \$1 billion in the first half of the year in terms of higher shipping and inventory costs, lost export volume and price deterioration.</p> <p>"Exports are a huge issue for the U.S. right now," said Jason Parker, the head of global trucking and intermodal at Flexport, a logistics company. "Getting exports out of the country is actually harder than getting imports into the country."</p> <p>Agriculture accounts for about one-tenth of America's goods exports, and roughly 20 percent of what U.S. farmers and ranchers produce is sent abroad. The industry depends on an intricate choreography of refrigerated trucks, railcars, cargo ships and warehouses that move fresh products around the globe, often seamlessly and unnoticed.</p> <p>U.S. farm exports have risen strongly this year, as the industry bounces back from the pandemic and benefits from a trade deal with China that required purchases of American agricultural products. Strong global demand for food and soaring commodities prices have lifted the value of U.S. agricultural exports more than 20 percent over last year.</p> <p>Still, exporters say they are leaving significant amounts of money on the table as a result of supply chain problems. And many farmers are now struggling to keep up with soaring costs for materials like fertilizer, air filters, pallets and packaging, as well as find farmhands and drivers to move their goods.</p>

A survey by the Agriculture Transportation Coalition, which represents exporters, found that 22 percent of foreign agriculture sales on average were being lost as a result of transportation challenges.

Delays at ports have particularly hurt products that move in corrugated metal containers, like cheese, butter, meat, walnuts and cotton.

One company, Talmera USA Inc., which exports milk powder, cheese and dairy ingredients like lactose, had a shipment delayed so many times that its load finally wound up on the original vessel it was assigned to after the ship had left the port in Seattle, circumnavigated Asia and returned weeks later.

Mr. Anderson said that his company's customers were beginning to look to suppliers in Europe, New Zealand and other countries for their purchases, even though the U.S. dairy industry has a reputation for high quality. "Frankly none of that matters to the customer if we can't get it there," he said.

Part of the problem is that shipping companies are able to charge far more to ferry goods from Asia to the United States than vice versa, so they don't want to waste time waiting for a less lucrative load departing from the West Coast.

According to data from Freightos, an online freight marketplace, the cost to ship a 40-foot container from Asia to the U.S. West Coast soared to \$18,730 in November — more than 17 times what it cost to make the reverse trip.

As a result, more than 80 percent of the 434,000 20-foot containers exported out of the Port of Los Angeles in September were empty — up from about two-thirds in September 2020 and September 2019.

Mario Cordero, the executive director of the Port of Long Beach, said that the price differential encouraged shipping companies to get their containers "back to Asia A.S.A.P. so you can load it with import items."

"And unfortunately the American exporter is impacted by this approach," he said.

A [supply crunch in the trucking industry](#) is also affecting farmers, as truckers find better pay and hours delivering holiday gifts than hauling soybeans and swine.

Tony Clayton, the president of Clayton Agri-Marketing Inc., in Jefferson City, Mo, exports live animals around the world for breeding. He said the company is competing at both ports and airports for space for dairy heifers, swine and goats. And many livestock truckers have found that they can earn more hauling dry freight.

"It is a challenge," Mr. Clayton said. "We're all fighting and competing for those people who will sit behind the steering wheel."

The infrastructure bill [that Congress passed](#) on Nov. 5 aims to remedy supply chain backlogs by investing \$17 billion in American ports, [many of which rank](#) among the least efficient in the world.

The bill also includes funding to improve railways, roads and waterways, as well as a provision to fund pop-up container yards outside [the Port of Savannah](#), in Georgia, to ease congestion. It will also lower the minimum age of truckers who can cross state lines to 18, in a bid to attract more workers to a profession that has become [a key bottleneck](#) in supply chains.

In September, the U.S. Department of Agriculture also [announced](#) it would dispense \$500 million to help farmers deal with transportation challenges and rising materials costs.

John D. Porcari, the Biden administration's port envoy, said farm exports are a "primary focus" for the administration, and that the White House was trying to encourage private sector companies, including ocean carriers, to get the supply chain moving.

The White House held a round table with agricultural exporters on Friday, and Mr. Porcari plans to visit the Port of Oakland, in California, one of the biggest export points for agriculture, this week.

“We know that some sectors have had more trouble than others, and we’re working to eliminate those bottlenecks,” Mr. Porcari said in an interview.

While agricultural exporters have welcomed long-term infrastructure investments, they remain concerned about more immediate losses.

Mr. Anderson — whose company is responsible for nearly 10 percent of America’s milk supply and a fifth of American butter production — said he had been frustrated that much of the public dialogue from the government and in the media had focused more on consumer imports.

“Are we going to get toys for Christmas? Are we going to get chips for automobiles? We think those are real concerns and they need to be talked about,” he said. “What’s not being talked about is the long-term damage being done to exporters in the world market and how that’s going to be devastating to our family farms.”

Agricultural exporters have had to get creative to bypass congested ports and warehouses. Mr. Anderson said his company was considering rerouting some shipments more than a thousand miles to the port in Vancouver.

Mike Durkin, the chief executive of Leprino Foods Company, the world’s largest maker of mozzarella cheese, [told House lawmakers](#) this month that nearly all of the company’s 2021 ocean shipments had been canceled and rebooked for a later date. More than 100 of the company’s bookings this year had been canceled and rebooked 17 times, Mr. Durkin said, equating to a five-month delay in delivering their cheese.

In the interim, Leprino Foods has had to pay to hold its cheese in refrigerated containers in carrier yards, racking up an additional \$25 million in fees this year.

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HEADLINE	11/14 Air route to Belarus closed to migrants
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/14/world/middleeast/belarus-mideast-air-route.html
GIST	<p>Dubai on Sunday began banning travelers from Iraq from passing through the emirate on their way to Belarus, cutting off the last major air route from the Middle East to Minsk in an effort to halt a humanitarian crisis that has left thousands of people stranded at Belarus’s border with Poland.</p> <p>Along with the Iraqis, Syrians also appeared to be blocked from boarding airlines in Dubai, despite holding Belarusian visas, according to travel agents and passengers. Some had leveraged their life savings to make the journey.</p> <p>The flight ban followed an intense diplomatic campaign by European Union members alarmed by a tide of thousands of mostly Iraqi migrants lured to Belarus when it loosened its visa rules in August. Hoping for a path into the European Union, they instead found themselves in freezing forest camps on the border of Poland, Latvia and Lithuania.</p> <p>The European Union has called the moves by Belarus an attempt to “weaponize” migrants and force a crisis in order to punish the E.U. for sanctions it has imposed on the country and for criticizing its strongman leader, Alexander Lukashenko.</p> <p>Over the course of the weekend, several airlines in the region put in effect bans similar to that imposed in Dubai. But the effect was more immediate in Dubai, where airline employees prevented some travelers from boarding planes, effectively stranding them.</p>

Some Kurds in Dubai, fleeing Iraq primarily for economic reasons, said they had been prevented from boarding flights operated by Belavia, Belarus's state-owned airline.

"Now we are waiting inside the airport cafeteria for the mercy of God," said Zanyar Kawan, 21, who like many of the migrants is an Iraqi Kurd. "But it seems the mercy of God won't come through."

Another passenger, who asked to be identified only as Yousuf for fear of reprisals, said Belavia employees had prevented at least 50 travelers from Sulaimaniya, a city in Iraqi Kurdistan, from boarding a flight to Minsk from Dubai.

"Everything we have is legal regarding visas and tickets," he said. "Why is it only us Kurds cannot fly?"

Some passengers said the ban had led them to abandon their plans to travel to Belarus and return to Iraq, but Yousuf, 20, said he would visit the Belarusian Consulate in Dubai on Monday in the hopes of making it work. "I don't want to return," he said.

On Friday, Turkish carriers said they would not fly Iraqi, Syrian and Yemeni passengers to Minsk, and on Saturday, Cham Wings, a Syrian airline, said in a statement that it had suspended flights from Damascus to Minsk in response to the situation at the Belarusian-Polish border.

The bans appeared to be achieving their goals.

In Iraq, travel agents said they had begun telling clients not to go to Minsk. "I'm advising people not to go in these conditions, because nothing is guaranteed," said one agent, Arkan Othman.

It was not just the bans, Mr. Othman said. Even if his customers somehow made it to Belarus, many Iraqi migrants there have found themselves stranded in freezing temperatures at the border.

And if they are able to successfully cross the border, migrants still need to find their way out of the so-called restricted zone, through one of Europe's oldest and densest forests, and to send a message to local aid groups.

On Friday, the body of a Syrian man who had been trying to cross the border was found, the local police said. The authorities said he was the ninth migrant to die trying to make his way into the European Union.

But activists say that the real death toll is much higher.

On the Polish side of the border with Belarus, the situation remained tense on Sunday, with a heavy presence of police officers and soldiers. The government in Warsaw has barred all nonlocal residents, including journalists and doctors, from approaching the border.

The Polish police [said Sunday](#) that they detained 22 Iraqi citizens out of 50 people who crossed the border near the town of Starzyna, about 80 miles from where the migrants are gathered in Belarus.

Belarusian soldiers were recorded destroying the fences that demarcate the border with Poland and blinding Polish units with strobe lights and laser beams, [Poland's border guard](#) said on Twitter.

Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki of Poland said in an interview Sunday with the Polish Press Agency that the situation at the border "has gone too far," and suggested that along with Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia, Poland could invoke Article 4 of [the NATO Treaty](#), which calls for military consultation when a member state's territorial integrity has been threatened.

A Polish soldier also died at the border late on Saturday of a gunshot, which the authorities called an accident.

HEADLINE	11/14 Who leaving jobs in record numbers?
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/as-american-workers-leave-jobs-in-record-numbers-a-closer-look-at-who-is-quitting-11636894801?mod=hp_lead_pos10
GIST	<p>American workers' stampede toward the exits hasn't let up. New data puts a finer point on who, exactly, is leaving jobs these days.</p> <p>Workers resigned from a record 4.4 million jobs in September, according to Labor Department data, and new surveys show that low-wage workers, employees of color and women outside the management ranks are those most likely to change roles. The findings signal that turnover isn't evenly spread across the U.S. workforce even as employers across industries struggle to fill a variety of roles.</p> <p>The overall percentage of people considering leaving their jobs—about three in 10, according to research by consulting firm Mercer LLC—is fairly consistent with historical trends. But sentiment varies across demographics and occupations. While front-line and low-wage positions typically see high rates of turnover, for example, employees in those roles are especially likely to leave now, Mercer found in a survey of 2,000 U.S. workers conducted in August.</p> <p>And a survey of 3,600 U.S. workers released recently by software maker Qualtrics found a growing share of women open to changing roles. Some 63% of female middle managers said they intended to stay in their jobs next year, a drop from 75% in 2021, while 58% of women in nonmanagerial roles said the same.</p> <p>For Nakisha Hicks, the Covid-19 pandemic created professional challenges and an opportunity to re-evaluate her long-term career priorities. She started working at the Nashville Symphony in late 2019 and was quickly promoted to vice president of human resources. The role required her to manage the organization's employee strategy through the onset of the pandemic, which involved furloughing 85% of staff.</p> <p>At the same time, a coaching business she had launched outside of work to help HR professionals, particularly women of color, advance their careers was blooming. As workers faced pandemic layoffs and contemplated job changes, Ms. Hicks hosted Zoom workshops on virtual networking, built her client base and hired a small staff.</p> <p>Last June she returned to work in the Nashville Symphony office and found herself making hard choices about how to allocate her time. By the next month she had begun making more from her coaching business than from her job, and on Nov. 1 she resigned to focus on her business full time.</p> <p>"I've been a W-2 employee since I was 14," said the 42-year-old Ms. Hicks. "For me, I reached where I wanted to reach in my career and it was like, 'What's next for me?' It was a natural progression."</p> <p>Among front-line and low-wage workers in Mercer's survey, 37% of food, retail and hospitality staffers are thinking of quitting, up from a historic norm of 27% among eight million employee responses collected by the company over the past five years.</p> <p>Nearly half of low-wage and front-line workers surveyed said their pay and benefits were insufficient while 41% said they felt burned out from demanding workloads. Some 35% of Black employees and 40% of Asian employees said they were considering leaving, compared with 26% of white employees. Historically, Black and Asian employees have reported considering quitting at rates just under 30%, consistent with the general workforce.</p> <p>The nation's high turnover trend has maintained momentum over the past several months as factors like plentiful job openings, a continuing child-care crisis and increased household savings have made job-hopping—or simply quitting—more attractive to some workers.</p> <p>In a labor market where job openings outnumber applicants, companies have been brainstorming how to get more candidates in the door. The hiring overhaul signals a potentially broad rethink of job</p>

	<p>qualifications. The change could help millions of people get jobs previously out of reach, according to economists and workforce experts.</p> <p>U.S. workers left 20 million jobs between May and September this year, according to the latest federal data, a number more than 50% higher than the resignations handed in during the same period last year. That figure was also 15% above the level from spring and summer 2019, when the job market was the hottest it had been in almost 50 years.</p> <p>The Qualtrics survey found even higher rates of people considering leaving their jobs than Mercer's research did. Some 62% of workers planned to stay in their current jobs next year, the survey found, down from 65% in 2021.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/14 Climate promises: actions of a handful
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/14/climate/glasgow-cop26-leadership.html?action=click&module=Well&pgtype=Homepage&section=Climate%20and%20Environment
GIST	<p>GLASGOW — After two weeks of lofty speeches and bitter negotiations among nearly 200 nations, the question of whether the world will make significant progress to slow global warming still comes down to the actions of a handful of powerful nations that remain at odds over how best to address climate change.</p> <p>The United Nations global conference on climate change closed Saturday with a hard-fought agreement that calls on countries to return next year with stronger emissions-reduction targets and promises to double the money available to help countries cope with the effects of global warming. It also mentions by name — for the first time in a quarter century of global climate negotiations — the main cause of climate change: fossil fuels.</p> <p>But it did not succeed in helping the world avert the worst effects of climate change. Even if countries fulfill all the emissions promises they have made, they still put the world on a dangerous path toward a planet that will be warmer by some 2.4 degrees Celsius by year 2100, compared to preindustrial times.</p> <p>That misses by a wide margin the target of limiting warming to 1.5 degrees that scientists say is necessary to avert the worst consequences of warming. And it sets the stage for worsening storms, wildfires, droughts and sea-level rise as well as the social and economic upheaval that would accompany a widening climate crisis.</p> <p>A relative handful of political leaders around the world — in capital cities such as Washington, Beijing and New Delhi — hold much of the influence over whether those promises are kept and the arc of warming can be sufficiently bent away from disaster. But they face a complex combination of pressures: industry interests that stand in the way of regulations, demands from developing countries for money to help them transition away from fossil fuels, and an increasingly vocal movement among citizens to rein in emissions more quickly and deliver what they call climate justice.</p> <p>Chief among the leaders facing such pressures is President Biden, who is pursuing one of the biggest climate legislation efforts ever attempted in the United States, but who faces heavy resistance not only from Republicans, but from key senators within his own party.</p> <p>At the same time, in China, will Xi Jinping — just recently elevated to the pantheon of Communist Party leaders alongside Mao Zedong — be able or willing to corral provincial leaders to reduce their use of the coal that has powered China's economic rise? Can India's prime minister, Narendra Modi, whose representatives weakened the final agreement's language on coal at the 11th hour on Saturday, achieve his pledge of boosting renewable energy sources fivefold by 2030? Will Brazil keep its promise to join other countries in reversing deforestation in the Amazon?</p>

The pledges have kept the goal of limiting warming to 1.5 degrees “within reach — but its pulse is weak,” said Alok Sharma, the British politician who presided over the summit. “And it will only survive if we keep our promises, if we translate commitments into rapid action.”

The test of rapid action includes what his own government does.

Britain, the birthplace of the Industrial Revolution and one of history’s largest emitters of planet-warming greenhouse gases, has said it intends to reduce its emissions by 68 percent by 2030, compared with 1990 levels.

But Britain is also facing criticism for building new roads and airports — both potential sources of carbon dioxide emissions, which are among the main causes of global warming — and for continuing to extract oil and gas in the North Sea. Mikaela Loach, a young Briton who has [sued the British government](#) over an oil and gas project there, [responded to the summit outcome on Twitter](#) by dubbing it “#CopOut26.”

“We cannot sit & wait for govs to make the right decisions,” she wrote. “WE all must be part of movements. WE have to act to end the fossil fuel era.”

Also this weekend Greta Thunberg, the young climate activist, criticized the United States for its [sales of offshore oil leases](#).

Courts have already begun to weigh in. Citizens in Germany, Pakistan and the Netherlands have sued to force their governments to take stronger action against climate change. In the United States, an environmental law nonprofit has sued the government on behalf of 21 young plaintiffs.

And in the first climate case against a private company, a local Dutch court earlier this year [instructed Royal Dutch Shell](#), one of the world’s largest oil companies, to sharply cut emissions from all of its global operations. The company is appealing the court action.

For businesses, the biggest effect from the Glasgow climate meeting is likely to come from an accord that was announced on the sidelines: A coalition of the world’s biggest investors, banks and insurers that collectively control [\\$130 trillion in assets](#) pledged to use that capital to hit “net zero” emissions targets in their investments by 2050. That push would make limiting climate change a central focus of many major financial decisions.

But lawmakers will likely face industry pressure over the writing of new regulations defining just what constitutes net zero investments

Success or failure could end up depending significantly on what government regulators come up with, said Simon Stiell, the environment minister from Grenada, a Caribbean island nation that is particularly vulnerable to sea-level rise. “I expect there will be a significant lag between those pledges and it getting to a point where you have carrots and then you have the stick,” he said. “That piece isn’t part of the discussions that took place.”

Beyond that, the consequences of the Glasgow summit for private businesses are less clear. In Europe, many companies have already adjusted their business models for the next decade to align with new European Union laws unveiled this past summer, ahead of the summit, which include high carbon taxes that apply to a widening swath of industries.

Airbus, for example, is developing technology for hydrogen fueled planes. Europe’s auto industry is doubling down on shifting to electric vehicles, even if many carmakers did not join a pledge struck in Glasgow to [phase out](#) gasoline car sales. Luxembourg-based ArcelorMittal, the largest steel maker outside of China, says it aims to reduce the company’s “carbon emissions intensity” in Europe by 35 percent by 2030. That is partly driven by high carbon taxes.

Oil and gas companies, though, are nowhere near retreating from their core businesses even though it is the burning of fossil fuels that creates the carbon dioxide that is warming the world. The leaders of these companies say that they need their fossil fuel revenues to fund alternative energy investments — particularly at a time when oil and gas prices are enormously high. “We are a cash machine at these types of prices,” said Bernard Looney, chief executive of BP, on a call with analysts this month.

European and American oil and gas companies could potentially gain from one contentious paragraph in the summit document. It calls for a “phasing down” of coal but says nothing about reducing oil and gas production. As coal declines, producers of liquefied natural gas, a competitor to coal in electricity generation, stand to gain new markets.

A number of the promises made in Glasgow could pose a test for a broad swath of industries. For instance, a landmark deal to reduce deforestation by half by 2030 would inevitably affect a range of companies that use [products linked to deforestation](#), such as palm oil and wood. “Almost every sector of our economy is part of the crime of deforestation,” said Mindy Lubber, who heads Ceres, a nonprofit that works with companies and investors to address their environmental effects.

Some scientists saw the results of the Glasgow summit as a call to further scientific action.

Maisa Rojas, a climate modeler at the University of Chile, said researchers need to better quantify the effects of climate change on vulnerable people and communities. That will help address an issue that was one of the most bitterly argued at Glasgow — [“loss and damage,”](#) or the question of what is owed to people who have barely contributed to global warming but are most harmed by it.

“We need a systematic understanding and monitoring of what is going on,” said Dr. Rojas, who is the director of the university’s [Center for Climate and Resilience Research](#).

Indeed, one of the most important issues that at-risk countries like Grenada plan to press in the coming months is financing for loss and damage. These nations did not win their battle in Glasgow, instead getting only a commitment from rich countries to have a “dialogue” on the compensation issue in the future.

Mr. Stiell argued that simply offering disaster relief, as some countries including the United States have suggested, is insufficient. Loss and damage funding is also required for the slow attrition of land due to sea-level rise and for agricultural losses from long running droughts. “There needs to be outcomes beyond a dialogue,” he said.

Many of the youth activists who protested outside the talks said the promises didn’t go nearly far enough to address a problem that they are already living with. Mitzi Jonelle Tan, an activist from the Philippines who joined tens of thousands of activists on the streets of Glasgow to rally for “climate justice,” said the outcome felt like “a stab in the back from those who call themselves leaders.”

“But the youth climate movement will keep fighting,” she said, “even when we are angry, sad, or afraid, because this is everything to our generation.”

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HEADLINE	11/14 Surgeon General: potential winter surge
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2021/nov/14/surgeon-general-warns-coronavirus-could-surge-over/
GIST	<p>U.S. Surgeon General Vivek Murthy warned Sunday that parts of the country with colder temperatures could see a resurgence in the coronavirus this year if vaccinations do not increase.</p> <p>Dr. Murthy issued the warning during an appearance on “Fox News Sunday” to discuss the ongoing pandemic.</p>

	<p>“As winter approaches again and as people get prepared for the holidays ... we should be prepared for the fact that there may be an uptick in cases that we see in various parts of the country with cold weather,” Dr. Murthy said.</p> <p>The surgeon general argued that the impact of the virus would be significantly reduced in areas with high vaccination rates.</p> <p>“A couple of things that are critical for people to keep in mind and number one is if you are vaccinated ... your chances of both getting sick and transmitting the virus to someone else are much much lower,” said Dr. Murthy. “So this makes it all the more important as winter approaches to get vaccinated.”</p> <p>The warning comes as overall coronavirus cases have remained stuck around 70,000 per day for the last two weeks.</p> <p>Health officials also are beginning to see a stall in the drop among COVID-19 hospitalizations.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/13 Russia Covid deaths new daily record
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/russias-covid-19-deaths-set-daily-record-81148276
GIST	<p>MOSCOW -- Russia is reporting a new daily high number of COVID-19 deaths, while the the total number of coronavirus infections during the pandemic in the country has topped 9 million.</p> <p>The surge in daily deaths and infections that began in mid-September appeared to plateau over the past week, but the national coronavirus task force said Saturday that a record 1,241 people died from the virus over the past day, two more than the previous record reported on Wednesday.</p> <p>The task force said 39,256 new infections were recorded, bringing the country’s case total to 9.03 million.</p> <p>Russia imposed a “non-working” week in early November, closing many businesses, with the aim of stemming the virus’s surge.</p> <p>Two bills outlining new restriction measures were introduced in parliament on Friday, with the aim of their taking effect next year. They would restrict access to many public places, as well as domestic and international trains and flights, to those who have been fully vaccinated, have recovered from COVID-19 or are medically exempt from vaccination.</p> <p>The surge in infections and deaths comes amid low vaccination rates, lax public attitudes toward taking precautions and the government’s reluctance to toughen restrictions. Fewer than 40% of Russia’s nearly 146 million people have been fully vaccinated, even though the country approved a domestically developed COVID-19 vaccine months before most of the world.</p> <p>In total, the coronavirus task force has reported more than 254,000 deaths — by far the highest death toll in Europe. Some experts believe the true figure is even higher. Reports by Russia’s statistical service, Rosstat, that tally coronavirus-linked deaths retroactively reveal much higher mortality: 462,000 people with COVID-19 died between April 2020 and September of this year.</p> <p>Russian officials have said the task force only includes deaths for which COVID-19 was the main cause, and uses data from medical facilities. Rosstat uses wider criteria for counting virus-related deaths and takes its numbers from civil registry offices where registering a death is finalized.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/14 Colorado hospitals on edge amid surge
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Health/colorado-hospitals-edge-amid-renewed-covid-surge-staffing/story?id=81087590

GIST

As winter approaches, hospitals across the state of Colorado are facing a renewed COVID-19 crisis with an influx of patients flooding into health care facilities. Front-line workers continue to bear the brunt of the state's latest wave, with staffing shortages only exacerbating existing issues.

"Our hospitals and ICUs are filling up with patients who are going on ventilators and many of them dying," Dr. Diana Breyer, a critical care physician at UHealth, told ABC News.

There are now more than 1,500 patients receiving care for COVID-19 across Colorado, marking the highest number of patients in nearly a year, according to federal data.

On average, nearly 230 residents are being admitted to the hospital each day, with state data now showing more than 94% of intensive care beds are currently in use statewide.

The number of people currently infected is approaching the highest levels of the pandemic, with 1 in 48 people in the state estimated to be currently infectious, according to the modeling report released earlier this month by the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment and Colorado School of Public Health.

"I wish that people could see what I see as we are in another surge with COVID-19," said Breyer.

Breyer, who currently cares for some of the sickest patients at three of UHealth hospitals in northern Colorado, explained that she is growing increasingly concerned about the significant increase in the number of patients she is seeing.

"With this surge we are seeing younger patients in our ICUs. We have seen patients of all ages throughout this pandemic," Breyer said, adding that the great majority of these patients are unvaccinated. "We are seeing people get very sick and die from this disease and these people don't need to be dying right now."

Like many other front-line workers across the country, Colorado health workers are overworked and exhausted, leading to critical staffing shortages.

"It is difficult to care for so many COVID-19 patients, just the challenges of how long they're here with us, as well as the strain that it puts on the staff," Dawn Sculco, chief nursing officer at Valley View Hospital in Glenwood Springs, Colorado, told ABC News. "From an organizational perspective this is an all-hands-on-deck situation."

To help manage the influx of patients who are in need of care across the state, Colorado health officials announced late Tuesday that the state had reactivated crisis standards of care for staffing of health care systems.

"We want to be sure Coloradans know they can and should continue to access necessary health care. If you're sick and need care, please go get it," Dr. Eric France, Colorado Department of Health's chief medical officer, said in a statement. "Activating staffing crisis standards of care allows health care systems to maximize the care they can provide in their communities with the staff they have available."

Staff are exhausted and stretched thin, said Dr. Matt Mendenhall, chief medical officer at Centura Littleton Adventist Hospital, told ABC News, adding that the work is "only getting harder."

"When our hospitals are overcrowded with patients, everybody will have care that is different than how we usually deliver it. And this can lead to delays, and I'm afraid, worse outcomes," Breyer said.

Concerns that the pandemic will worsen in Colorado in the weeks to come led Gov. Jared Polis to take additional executive action to allow all residents over the age of 18 to receive a booster shot six months after their second dose of the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines, or two months past their Johnson & Johnson vaccine.

	<p>Current federal guidelines have only authorized boosters for the elderly, those with underlying health conditions and for people deemed at high risk of infection.</p> <p>Polis declared "the entire State of Colorado high risk for exposure or transmission of COVID-19," in an executive order on Thursday.</p> <p>This week, Colorado officials also announced Federal Emergency Medical Agency medical surge teams had been requested for understaffed medical facilities.</p> <p>Polis signed an "urgent" executive order earlier this month that would permit the state's health department to order hospitals to transfer or stop admitting patients after reaching or nearing capacity.</p> <p>Health experts continue to urge Americans to get vaccinated, and boosted when eligible, to help stop the pandemic and prevent severe disease and deaths.</p> <p>At this time, approximately 62.3% of Colorado's total population has been fully vaccinated, ranking it 14th among states.</p> <p>"There's so much misinformation out there," said Breyer. "When I see people, they're at the end of their rope there. They're anxious and scared and about to go on a ventilator, some of whom will die. And I just wish that we could figure out what to do to convince more people of the safety and efficacy of the vaccination. It really is the No. 1 treatment that can prevent people from ending up here."</p>
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HEADLINE	11/14 Foreign students returning; small rebound
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/foreign-students-returning-us-pre-covid-levels-81172868
GIST	<p>International students are returning to U.S. colleges in stronger numbers this year, but the rebound has yet to make up for last year's historic declines as COVID-19 continues to disrupt academic exchange, according to a new survey.</p> <p>Nationwide, American colleges and universities saw a 4% annual increase in international students this fall, according to survey results released Monday by the Institute of International Education. But that follows a decrease of 15% last year — the steepest decline since the institute began publishing data in 1948.</p> <p>The upturn is better than many colleges were forecasting over the summer as the delta variant surged. But it also reflects continued obstacles as visa backlogs persist and as some students show reluctance to study abroad during the pandemic.</p> <p>Universities and U.S. officials hope this year's uptick is the start of a long-term rebound. As international travel ramps up, there's optimism that colleges will see growth past their pre-pandemic levels.</p> <p>"We expect a surge following the pandemic," Matthew Lussenhop, an acting U.S. assistant secretary of state, told reporters. This year's increase indicates that international students "continue to value a U.S. education and remain committed to pursuing studies in the United States," he added.</p> <p>Overall, 70% of U.S. colleges reported an uptick in international students this fall, while 20% saw decreases and 10% remained level, according to the institute. That's based on a preliminary survey of more than 800 U.S. schools. The nonprofit plans to issue full nationwide data next year.</p> <p>At least some of the increase is due to new students who hoped to come to the U.S. last year but delayed their plans because of the pandemic. All told, there was a 68% increase in newly enrolled international students this year, a dramatic increase compared with last year's decrease of 46%.</p>

For many schools, even a modest upturn is a relief. Over the summer, officials at U.S. universities worried that the delta variant would dash any hopes of a rebound. But for many, that did not come to pass.

In August, U.S. embassies and consulates in India reported that they had recently issued visas to a record 55,000 students even after starting the process two months late because of COVID-19. Embassies in China reported that they had issued 85,000 student visas.

At the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, more than 10,000 international students enrolled this fall, which nearly offsets a 28% decline from last year.

“What we’re seeing now is a return to normal for our international populations,” said Andy Borst, director of undergraduate admissions at the university. The rebound is fueled by new undergraduates, with those from India up nearly 70% over pre-pandemic levels.

“We just had this pent-up demand,” Borst said. “A lot of Big Ten schools saw increases beyond what we were expecting.”

At some schools with big brands overseas, enrollments rebounded past their 2019 figures. More than 17,000 international students enrolled at New York University this fall, up 14% over 2019, according to school data.

At the University of Rochester, another top destination for international students in New York, enrollments from abroad surged 70% over 2019 levels, driven by a boom in graduate students, according to school data.

Most students were able to arrive on campus within the first weeks of the semester, but many dealt with visa backlogs at U.S. embassies and consulates, not to mention costly flights and cancellations, said Jennifer Blask, the university’s head of international admissions.

The vast majority of U.S. colleges returned to in-person learning by this fall, but not all international students are physically on campus. After last year’s shift to remote learning, many schools have continued offering online classes to students abroad, allowing thousands to stay enrolled from afar.

Out of all international students enrolled at U.S. colleges this year, the survey found that about 65% were taking classes on campus.

For Chinese students unable to arrive for this semester, NYU is continuing to let them use its academic center in Shanghai, which is traditionally for U.S. students studying abroad. The university also let international students use its London and Abu Dhabi locations last year, but has since returned them to use for study abroad programs.

For some colleges, the new flexibility of online learning helped avoid further enrollment setbacks. In the past, students at the University of San Francisco might have been able to start the term a week late if they faced visa or travel problems. Now, those facing visa delays can arrive halfway through the term or later, and in the meantime study online from abroad.

Facing travel restrictions inside Vietnam, graduate student Vinh Le was unable to get to Ho Chi Minh City’s airport in time for the start of fall classes. Instead, he studied online for more than two months until he could get his first vaccine shot, which allowed him to travel.

Taking classes online was challenging because of the time difference, he said, but professors were “very supportive” and recorded their lectures to be watched any time. He ended up making it to the University of San Francisco on Nov. 1.

International students are seen as important contributors to U.S. campuses for a variety of reasons. Colleges say they help provide a diverse mix of cultures and views on campus. Many end up working in

high-demand fields after graduating. And some colleges rely on the financial benefits of international students, who are typically charged higher tuition rates.

Although many colleges have avoided a second year of declines, there's still concern that the upturn may be isolated to certain types of colleges. The new survey found that, last year, community colleges suffered much steeper declines than four-year universities, with a 24% backslide nationwide.

Researchers are still analyzing this year's data, but some worry that community colleges may continue to lag behind.

There are also questions about whether the rebound will continue past this year. New vaccine requirements for foreign travelers could make it harder for some students to get here, and colleges are expecting continued competition from colleges in Australia, Canada and other nations looking to boost their international populations.

Still, officials at many colleges are optimistic. More vaccines are being sent overseas, and newly lifted travel bans promise to reduce barriers to travel. Some also credit President Joe Biden for sending a message that America wants students from abroad.

In July, the administration issued a statement promising a "renewed" commitment to international education, saying it would work to make overseas students feel welcome.

Rachel Banks, senior director of public policy and legislative strategy for NAFSA, an international education association, said that's a shift from the Trump administration.

"In the last administration, there was a lot of negativity and negative rhetoric around international students," Banks said. "Biden is now trying to telegraph to the world that there's interest in having international students coming here."

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HEADLINE	11/15 India opens to vaccinated foreign tourists
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/india-opens-vaccinated-foreign-tourists-18-months-81174112
GIST	<p>NEW DELHI -- India began allowing fully vaccinated foreign tourists to enter the country on regular commercial flights on Monday, in the latest easing of coronavirus restrictions as infections fall and vaccinations rise.</p> <p>Tourists entering India must be fully vaccinated, follow all COVID-19 protocols and test negative for the virus within 72 hours of their flight, according to the health ministry. Many will also need to undergo a post-arrival COVID-19 test at the airport.</p> <p>However, travelers from countries which have agreements with India for mutual recognition of vaccination certificates, such as the U.S., U.K. and many European nations, can leave the airport without undergoing a COVID-19 test.</p> <p>This is the first time India has allowed foreign tourists on commercial flights to enter the country since March 2020, when it imposed one of the toughest lockdowns in the world in an attempt to contain the pandemic. Fully vaccinated tourists on chartered flights were allowed to enter starting last month.</p> <p>It comes as coronavirus infections have fallen significantly, with daily new cases hovering at just above 10,000 for over a month.</p> <p>To encourage travelers to visit India, the government plans to issue 500,000 free visas through next March. The moves are expected to boost the tourism and hospitality sector which was battered by the pandemic.</p>

	<p>With more than 35 million reported coronavirus infections, India is the second-worst-hit country after the U.S. Active coronavirus cases stand at 134,096, the lowest in 17 months, according to the health ministry.</p> <p>Nearly 79% of India's adult population has received at least one vaccine dose while 38% is fully vaccinated. The federal government has asked state administrations to conduct door-to-door campaigns to accelerate the vaccine campaign.</p> <p>Fewer than 3 million foreign tourists visited India in 2020, a drop of more than 75% from 2019, when tourism brought nearly \$30 billion in earnings.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/14 Outbreak: China locks down university
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/outbreak-prompts-china-lock-university-campus-81173512
GIST	<p>BEIJING -- China has confined nearly 1,500 university students to their dormitories and hotels following an outbreak of COVID-19 in the northeastern city of Dalian.</p> <p>The order was issued Sunday after several dozen cases were reported at Zhuanghe University City and hundreds of students were transferred to hotels for observation.</p> <p>Students were attending class remotely and having their meals delivered to their rooms.</p> <p>The lockdown is the latest example of China's zero-tolerance approach to the outbreak, which has brought considerable disruption to people's lives and livelihoods.</p> <p>Quarantines, obligatory testing and travel restrictions have become the new normal for those even remotely caught up in outbreaks. The country's vaccination rate is among the world's highest and authorities have begun administering booster shots as winter descends.</p> <p>While those measures have met little open resistance, the recent killing of a quarantined person's pet dog by health workers brought a wave of complaints online. The incident in the central city of Shangrao prompted local authorities to issue a statement saying the pet owner and health workers had "reached an understanding."</p> <p>Following the incident, the China Small Animal Protection Association called for a quarantine system to care for pets caught in such situations.</p> <p>"Pets are people's spiritual partners and should not be harmed under the pretext of fighting the pandemic," it said in a statement. "If you bring the hand of doom down on an innocent life without the slightest ability to defend itself, then how can you even talk about humanitarianism?"</p> <p>Among other new measures, Beijing starting Wednesday will require all people arriving from other parts of the country by plane, train, bus or car to produce a negative virus test taken over the previous 48 hours.</p> <p>Despite isolated cases in various parts of the country, China has been able to suppress major outbreaks over the past year, with its total number of reported cases standing at 98,315 with 4,636 deaths.</p> <p>On Monday, the National Health Commission announced 32 new cases of local transmission over the previous 24 hours, 25 of them in Dalian.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/14 Experts skeptical: watered down hope
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Technology/wireStory/scientists-skeptical-alive-15-temperature-limit-81167915
GIST	<p>GLASGOW, Scotland -- While world leaders and negotiators are hailing the Glasgow climate pact as a good compromise that keeps a key temperature limit alive, many scientists are wondering what planet these leaders are looking at.</p>

Crunching the numbers they see a quite different and warmer Earth.

“In the bigger picture I think, yes, we have a good plan to keep the 1.5-degree goal within our possibilities,” United Nations climate chief Patricia Espinosa told The Associated Press, referring to the overarching global goal of limiting warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) since pre-industrial times.

United Kingdom Prime Minister Boris Johnson, the conference host, agreed, calling the deal a “clear road map limiting the rise in global temperatures to 1.5 degrees.”

But many scientists are far more skeptical. Forget 1.5 degrees, they say. Earth is still on a path to exceed 2 degrees (3.6 Fahrenheit).

“The 1.5C goal was already on life support before Glasgow and now it’s about time to declare it dead,” Princeton University climate scientist Michael Oppenheim told The Associated Press in an email Sunday.

A few of the 13 scientists the AP interviewed about the Glasgow pact said they see just enough progress to keep alive the 1.5-degree Celsius limit — and with it, some hope. But barely.

The optimists point to many agreements that came out of Glasgow, including a United States-China deal to work harder together to cut emissions this decade, as well as separate multi-nation agreements that target methane emissions and coal-fired power. After six years of failure, a market-based mechanism would kick-start trading credits that reduce carbon in the air.

The 1.5-degree mark is the more stringent of two targets from the historic 2015 Paris climate accord. United Nations officials and scientists consider it key because a 2018 scientific report found dramatically worse effects on the world after 1.5 degrees.

The world has already warmed 1.1 degrees (2 degrees Fahrenheit) since pre-industrial time, so this is really about a few tenths of a degree more. The United Nations calculated that to limit warming to 1.5 degrees, countries need to cut their emissions in half by 2030. Emissions are now going up, not down, by about 14% since 2010, Espinosa said.

German researcher Hans-Otto Portner said the Glasgow conference “got work done, but did not make enough progress.”

“Warming will by far exceed 2 degrees Celsius. This development threatens nature, human life, livelihoods, habitats and also prosperity,” said Portner, who co-chairs one of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change scientific reports the United Nations relies on.

Instead of big changes in bending the temperature curve as the United Nations had hoped for from Glasgow, they got only tiny tweaks, according to scientists who run computer simulations.

“Heading out of Glasgow we have shaved maybe 0.1C off of warming ... for a best-estimate of 2.3C warming,” Breakthrough Institute climate scientist and director Zeke Hausfather said in an email. Hausfather has done climate modeling with colleagues for Carbon Brief.

MIT professor Jon Sterman said his Climate Interactive team crunched some preliminary numbers after the Glasgow deal came out and it didn’t match leaders’ optimism.

“There is no plausible way to limit warming to 1.5 or even 2 (degrees) if coal is not phased out ... and as rapidly as possible, along with oil and gas,” he said.

On Saturday, India got a last-minute change to the pact: Instead of the “phase out” of coal and fossil fuel subsidies, the subsidies are to be “phased down.” Several of the scientists said that regardless of what the deal says, coal needs to end, not just decrease, to lessen future warming.

“‘Lessening’ will do less to slow the harmful effects of climate change than ‘eliminating,’” former NASA chief scientist Waleed Abdalati, who runs environmental research at the University of Colorado, said in an email.

Before the pact was finished, Climate Action Tracker, which also analyzes pledges to see how much warming they would lead to, said emission-cut pledges would lead to 2.4 degrees of warming.

The 1.5 figure “is balanced on a knife edge,” said tracker scientist Bill Hare of Australia.

One paragraph in the pact — which calls on countries whose emission-cutting goals aren’t in line with 1.5- or 2- degree limits to come back with new stronger goals by the end of next year — gives hope, Hare said.

But U.S. climate envoy John Kerry said Saturday night that paragraph probably doesn’t apply to the United States, the second-largest coal emitter and the largest historically, because the U.S. goal is so strong.

Jonathan Overpeck, a climate scientist who is dean of the University of Michigan’s environment school said the pact provided “watered down hope. ... We got an incomplete plan for slower action.”

“I went into the (conference) thinking 1.5C was still alive, and it appears the world’s leaders just didn’t have the backbone for that,” Overpeck said in an email.

Some progress was made, said University of Illinois climate scientist Donald Wuebbles, one of the key authors of the U.S. national climate assessment. “But the probability of getting to 1.5 degrees is much reduced, even to the point of almost being impossible. Even being able to get to 2 degrees is less likely.”

But some scientists held out hope.

“For the first time, I can really see a potential path forward to limiting warming to 1.5C,” Pennsylvania State University climate scientist Michael Mann said in an email. “But it will require both (a) countries making good on their current pledges and (b) further ratcheting up their current commitments.”

Johan Rockström of the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact and Research in Germany highlighted the “optimistic” scenario he and a few others see if all the countries that have promised net-zero emissions by mid-century actually achieve the goal — something most haven’t started concrete action on.

In that case, warming could be limited to 1.8 degrees or 1.9 degrees, Rockström said.

“That is a significant progress, but far from sufficient,” he said.

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HEADLINE	11/14 Counting Ethiopia war dead name by name
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/cry-loudly-counting-ethiopias-war-dead-81174111
GIST	<p>STOCKHOLM, Sweden -- The man who counts the dead sees them everywhere.</p> <p>They’re in the handwritten lists of names smuggled out of a region cut off from the world by war. They’re in the images of people shot and tossed off a cliff, tortured and pushed into a river, left unburied for days. They’re announced by grieving families in social media posts.</p> <p>They are the first thing he sees in the morning when he checks his messages. They are the last thing he sees at night, when they enter his dreams.</p>

He has been living with the dead for a year, since war erupted last November in Ethiopia's Tigray region. Tigrayans, a minority of some 6 million, were encircled as a falling-out with Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, the 2019 Nobel Peace Prize winner, turned deadly. It became an ethnic clash when Amhara fighters from a neighboring region allied with Ethiopia's government poured in.

Many Tigrayans joined the fight. But the man who counts the dead is in Sweden and could not.

So he quickly decided what he could do to help. In his small, neat apartment at the end of a metro line in Stockholm, Desta Haileselassie would apply his computer science background and research skills to compiling a list of Tigrayan victims, name by name.

It is slow, difficult work. Almost all communication with Tigray has been cut off, and foreign media is banned. Many in the diaspora have waited for months to know whether loved ones are alive, terrified to receive messages from home even as they yearn for news.

In the confused first days and weeks, Desta issued pleas on social media for help. He told anguished families that a list of the dead would be a memorial of a war Ethiopia's government seemed determined to hide. He made dozens of phone calls, then hundreds more.

The work took over his life. He stopped hiking, swimming or going to the gym, and he sleeps poorly. The guitar and keyboard he once played sit in his Stockholm apartment, untouched.

He has collected handwritten testimonies and photographs that make him feel sick or bring him to tears. He tries to calm weeping family members from afar, never meeting them in person. Months of exhaustion have collected under his eyes.

"There are days when I end up crying the whole evening," Desta says softly. "A very, very hard job to do, but I have to do it This is the least I can do to help my people."

Now, a year on, he has confirmed 3,080 names of the dead. The Associated Press has verified 30 of them chosen randomly, speaking with families and friends.

Victim Number 2,171 was Gebretsadkan Teklu Gebreyesus, shot dead by soldiers in the presence of his two young sons, the AP confirmed. Victim 1,599, Zeray Asfaw, was a bridegroom pulled from his wedding party and killed along with his best man, his friends and the father of the bride while the women screamed. Victim Number 2,915 was Amdekiros Aregawi Gebru, an ambulance driver gunned down while driving a woman in labor to a clinic, making it there before bleeding to death.

Desta has another 1,000 names he's still trying to verify.

"It's very, very disturbing, I'm very sorry," he says as he shows photos of corpses on the ground.

His list does not include ethnic Amhara, who are some of the war's latest victims after Tigray forces started moving toward Ethiopia's capital.

The Amhara Association of America has its own list of the dead, starting with the killing of hundreds of Amhara in the Tigray community of Mai Kadra in the earliest days of the war. The list has reached 1,994.

The two ethnicities are separate even in death. The United Nations says that while war crimes may have been committed on all sides, the most atrocities have been reported against Tigrayans by Ethiopian soldiers and their Eritrean allies.

One thing all agree on, including experts: The lists represent just a fraction of the dead.

Desta is certain that every Tigrayan has lost someone, whether to fighting or to house-to-house massacres or to starvation under an Ethiopian government blockade. To emphasize the shattered connections, he often mentions when a victim is a parent, or is killed alongside one. The word “mother” appears 43 times.

“His mother alone had to cry over her son’s body all day long,” one entry says.

Desta too has lost loved ones, 19 of them. The self-contained 36-year-old gently deflects questions, saying every victim on his list is like family.

But the thought of adding one name especially close to him is too much to bear. It brings him to tears when her name is mentioned. The single photo on display in the room where he works shows him embracing her as she smiles.

He calls her Amlishaway.

She is his mother.

Victim Number 51: Haben Sahle

Desta’s list includes 102 children. The news of the death of a 15-year-old boy was among the first to reach him.

Haben Sahle was a top student in the border town of Zalambessa and an only son. When the war engulfed Tigray, connection with him was lost.

In faraway California, the boy’s uncle, Angesom, received the first word in a phone call weeks later, in December. It was a well-intended lie.

Relatives in neighboring Eritrea told Angesom that family members in Zalambessa were fine. But Angesom knew that in their culture, the death of a loved one usually wouldn’t be shared over the phone.

A trio of Ethiopian Orthodox priests broke the terrible news in a surprise visit the following Sunday.

“When priests come to your house without warning, something’s wrong,” Angesom says.

The priests hadn’t known the boy. They didn’t know how he died. It took five more months for Angesom to reach his sister by phone for details.

She told him Ethiopian soldiers, and allied ones from Eritrea, were seeking out and killing men and teenage boys. Decades of rivalries and resentments over Tigray leaders’ long, often repressive hold on power had turned into slaughter.

As the soldiers approached their home, Haben Sahle’s mother said no one was there but her. But the soldiers fired at random and shot her son hidden inside.

As she recounted the killing, Angesom could finally begin to grieve.

“For six horrible months, I didn’t eat normal, sleep normal, work normal,” he says.

The distance was made worse by fears that Ethiopian authorities were monitoring phone calls. You could only ask loved ones vaguely if they were OK and had food and water, Angesom says.

Now silence has descended again, and he hasn’t reached his family in Tigray for the past four months. If he could speak with them again, he would tell them this: He will be their voice forever.

“If this is not genocide,” he says, “there will be nothing that will be labeled as genocide.”

With Angesom’s confirmation of the teenager’s death, Desta added him to his list. More than 90% of the names there are of men and boys, reflecting survivors’ accounts that they were often singled out for killing.

His work had barely begun.

Victim Number 70: Sibhat Berhe Desta. “Killed with other civilians by the Eritrean soldiers near Goda Bottle and Glass Share Company.”

On Dec. 23, a phone connected.

It was Desta’s brother in the Tigray capital, and he was in tears. Nineteen of their family members had been killed.

They were cousins and uncles from their mother’s birthplace. Desta knew some of them well. He had grown up with them, played with them as a child during visits to the village.

“I have a strong attachment to that place,” he says. He recalls Sibhat Berhe Desta as “a very protective and generous uncle. That’s what I vividly remember about him.”

His brother told him that on Dec. 2, Eritrean soldiers had forced their relatives to do manual labor while they stripped down a glass factory and carted the pieces away, part of widespread looting. Then the soldiers killed them.

Family members were forbidden to bury the bodies for 20 days, a grotesque practice widely reported in the war and meant as further insult to the dead.

“I was shocked, but over time I got so emotional,” Desta says. His voice wavers, then steadies.

He has not yet grieved. First, the fighting must end, he says.

Until then, as he counts the dead, he worries about his mother.

“She’s a very brave woman, and she’s my best friend,” Desta says. He covers his face and cries. “She’s always been there.”

In December, he was excited yet terrified to see a social media message from a friend about his mother. It said that with no other way to communicate inside Tigray, she had walked more than 130 kilometers, or 80 miles, from her home to the regional capital, Mekele, to see whether relatives were still alive.

In her late 50s, she hiked through mountainous terrain, sometimes sleeping in caves, taking part in a perilous migration by many Tigrayans searching for loved ones in the chaos. Walking along roads patrolled by hostile forces meant almost certain death.

She could have been killed any second, Desta thought.

On Jan. 4, or 62 days after the war began, he finally reached his mother by phone. She confirmed that she had gone to Mekele on foot twice and kept both journeys a secret from him. She didn’t want him to worry.

He was angry at her risk-taking, then relieved.

As they chatted, he decided not to mention his work counting the dead. She didn't need any more stress. But as they slipped back into daily conversations, he hit "record" each time, and saved the digital files. He feared each call might be their last.

Victim Numbers 333 and 334: Meaza Goshu and Kalayou Berhe. "Killed a few days after their wedding."

Victim Number 933: Mariamawit Alemayo, 6 years old. "Killed from heavy artillery shelling in Shire by the Eritrean soldiers. She was the only child to her mom."

Victim Number 1,577: Aba Gebreselassie. "He was an Orthodox Christian monk."

The death toll is one of the biggest unknowns of Ethiopia's war.

Among the world's most successful projects in counting the dead is The Kosovo Memory Book. It is a near-comprehensive, well-funded list of people killed in a war in a small geographic area that lasted for less than two years in the 1990s. But the Kosovo Memory Book is still updated even now.

Determining Ethiopia's death toll will be considerably more difficult, says Michael Spagat, chair of the nonprofit Every Casualty Counts, which focuses on how to count the dead in conflict.

The group discovered Desta's efforts as well as a parallel project by researchers centered at Ghent University in Belgium. Their lists are similar, Spagat says, but they capture "a relatively small fraction of it all."

The Belgian researchers fear that, too.

"If they're killing 10 people per village, then it's easily in the tens of thousands," says Tim Vanden Bempt, whose wife is Tigrayan. For months, he was tweeting a name from the list of dead every hour. That ended when a renewed government blockade on Tigray cut off the flow of information.

Spagat, an economics professor, calls the work ahead in Ethiopia "challenging in the extreme." With communications links severed, it's impossible to conduct even a standard sample survey of households to estimate the dead.

It's likely that Ethiopian authorities will never help, a stance he describes as common among governments in similar situations around the world.

"In many cases, they have done the killing," he says. "They'd rather it stay as buried as possible."

The warring sides have claimed tens of thousands of deaths among fighters alone.

Spagat's hopes are with the network of Ethiopian Orthodox priests in communities who traditionally are informed when residents die. But Tigrayan leaders in the church say scores of priests and other clergy members have been killed, too.

Despite the painstaking work to bring Ethiopia's dead out of the shadows, Spagat puts the chances of reaching a final toll at "possibly never."

The war has not just taken lives. In a nation that takes vast pride in its 3,000-year history, it has also ruptured Ethiopia's culture of honoring the dead.

It is usually the responsibility of the elderly to announce the death of a loved one. Now many families are scattered, with members missing or unreachable. With Tigray cut off from the world, people often don't know whether to mourn.

"When we're mourning, we're not even together," says a Tigrayan woman in the diaspora, speaking on condition of anonymity out of fear for loved ones still in Ethiopia. "You can't even cry loudly because of what's going on."

Victim on the Amhara side: Mekonen Girma, a farmer

The victims on the Amhara list are arranged by community rather than by number. While Tigray forces say they are fighting to pressure Ethiopia's government to end the blockade of their homeland, some Amhara have described house-to-house killings and other atrocities against civilians as revenge in communities like Chenna Teklehaymanot.

Once again, no one knows how many people have been killed. Tewodrose Tirfe, the chairman of the Amhara Association of America, is trying to find out.

"The numbers are probably much higher. We just don't have the bandwidth to investigate every atrocity," he says. But knowing he's drawing attention to victims means he "at least can feel at peace."

His team seeks out Amhara survivors like Zewditu Tikuye, who says her husband, farmer Mekonen Girma, was killed in the town of Kobo in July as Tigray forces swept in.

Zewditu fled her home as her husband stayed behind with their cattle. She heard about his death from people who buried him.

"Someone told me he was killed in a very cruel way," she says. "I wish I died with him."

She is bewildered because she says her husband had no interest in politics. Now she raises seven children alone.

"I have no idea why this war is going on," she says. "I don't even know if my relatives are still alive."

Amhara and Tigrayans had lived peacefully for many years and even intermarried, she says. But she is not sure they can coexist in the future.

The war has also split Ethiopia's diaspora, estimated at more than 2 million people. Horrified Tigrayans distance themselves from Amhara friends who cheer advances by Ethiopian forces, and vice versa. Once-favorite Ethiopian restaurants, a taste of home, are now avoided.

Tewodrose had not known of Desta's efforts to count the dead. He believes as many people as possible should document the horrors of the war.

But his group only counts Amhara. And Desta only counts Tigrayans.

"I have to prioritize my people," Desta says.

A red-and-yellow Tigray flag is displayed on his computer rather than the Ethiopian one. He says he no longer feels Ethiopian and is ready to throw away his passport at any time.

Victim Number 3,081: Yet to come

	<p>It's impossible not to fear the worst.</p> <p>Starvation is sweeping Tigray, and even basic medicines are running out under the blockade. The government has again bombarded the region with airstrikes. Residents say they kill civilians, including children.</p> <p>Tigray forces, which one of Desta's brothers has joined, are approaching the capital, Addis Ababa. Ethiopia's government calls this an "existential war."</p> <p>Desta hasn't spoken with his mother since June 26. The phone no longer rings through in a new blackout. Every day's attempt meets silence.</p> <p>Their last conversation was a normal one, much like the chats many Tigrayans had until a year ago. Sometimes, to escape the dead, Desta tries to feel that sense of normalcy again.</p> <p>Alone in his apartment, he turns to his dozens of recorded calls with his mother in Tigray.</p> <p>He presses "play."</p>
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HEADLINE	11/14 Houston festival tragedy 10th death: 9yr-old
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/year-trampled-crowd-astroworld-music-festival-dies-injuries/story?id=81172024
GIST	<p>The 9-year-old who was hospitalized with severe injuries following the violent Astroworld music festival crowd surge earlier this month has died from his injuries, his family confirmed Sunday.</p> <p>Ezra Blount was "trampled and catastrophically injured" at the concert on Nov. 5, when a wave of concertgoers began pushing one another during Travis Scott's performance, according to a statement issued by Blount family attorneys Ben Crump, Alex Hilliard, Bob Hilliard and Paul Grinke.</p> <p>He had attended the concert at NRG Park in Houston, Texas, with his father, and was on his father's shoulders when the crowd surge began, the boy's grandparents told ABC Houston station KTRK. At one point, Ezra got lost in the crowd of at least 50,000 people.</p> <p>According to a GoFundMe, the boy's father, Treston Blount, said that during the surge, he was crushed by other concertgoers and could not breathe. He said he fell and passed out, and he and his son were trampled by the crowd.</p> <p>Ezra's grandparents said they later found him alone at the hospital in a coma, suffering from major organ damage and severe brain swelling.</p> <p>"Ezra sustained life-threatening injuries and was placed in a medically induced coma on life support in an attempt to combat his brain, liver, and kidney trauma," the attorneys said in their statement Sunday. On Sunday, Ezra was pronounced dead, his family confirmed to KTRK.</p> <p>"The Blount family tonight is grieving the incomprehensible loss of their precious young son. This should not have been the outcome of taking their son to a concert, what should have been a joyful celebration," the Blount family attorneys said in a statement. "Ezra's death is absolutely heartbreaking. We are committed to seeking answers and justice for the Blount family. But tonight we stand in solidarity with the family, in grief, and in prayer."</p> <p>Following Ezra's hospitalization, his family was one of the many who filed lawsuits against Scott and others involved in organizing and managing the music festival.</p>

	<p>In their statement, the attorneys added: "The attorneys previously filed a lawsuit, alleging negligence relating to crowd control, failure to provide proper medical attention, hiring, training, supervision, and retention, that contributed to Ezra's death. The lawsuit names Scoremore Mgmt, Live Nation Entertainment, Travis Scott, Cactus Jack Records, and others as defendants."</p> <p>Ezra is one of 10 people who died at the music festival on Nov. 5. Various others were injured.</p> <p>"I am saddened to learn of Ezra's death this evening. Our city tonight prays for his mom, dad, grandparents, other family members and classmates at this time. They will need all of our support in the months and years to come. May God give them strength. RIP Ezra. st #AstroWorld," Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner tweeted Sunday.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/13 Ukraine: Russia troops mass on border
SOURCE	https://news.trust.org/item/20211113211122-i585d
GIST	<p>KYIV, Nov 13 (Reuters) - Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy has said there are nearly 100,000 Russian soldiers near Ukraine's border and that Western countries had shared information about active Russian troop movements with Kyiv.</p> <p>"I hope the whole world can now clearly see who really wants peace and who is concentrating nearly 100,000 soldiers at our border," he said in a video of a speech on Wednesday carried on his website.</p> <p>The Russian troop movements near the Ukrainian border have spurred fears of a possible attack. Moscow has dismissed such suggestions as inflammatory and complained about increasing activity in the region by the NATO transatlantic alliance.</p> <p>On Nov. 3, the Ukrainian Defence Ministry put the number of Russian troops near Ukraine's border at 90,000.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/13 Ships keep coming; port logjam at records
SOURCE	https://www.msn.com/en-us/money/other/ships-keep-coming-pushing-us-port-logjam-and-waits-to-records/ar-AAQEMaZ
GIST	<p>The logjam of container ships outside the California ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach swelled to another record as stepped-up efforts to clear cargo off the docks failed to prevent the average wait for vessels from reaching nearly 17 days.</p> <p>The queue, both at anchor and in a holding zone, rose to 83 ships as of late Friday, four more than Wednesday and topping the previous high of 81 set earlier in the week, according to officials who monitor marine traffic in San Pedro Bay. The average wait increased to 16.9 days, double the level from two months ago, according to L.A.'s Wabtec Port Optimizer.</p> <p>Strained supply chains have become an economic drag on the world's largest economy and a political risk for President Joe Biden as the disruptions put upward pressure on inflation while highlighting shortages of workers, including truck drivers and warehouse staff. Consumer sentiment is deteriorating amid a spike in the cost of living.</p> <p>"Every sector of the supply chain has reached capacity," Port of Long Beach Executive Director Mario Cordero said in a statement this week announcing that its terminals had their second-busiest October on record.</p> <p>"We are trying to add capacity by searching for vacant land to store containers, expanding the hours of operation at terminals, and implementing a fee that will incentivize ocean carriers to pull their containers out of the port as soon as possible."</p>

	<p>The White House earlier this week touted incremental progress at L.A.-Long Beach-- a 20% decline in the number of containers sitting for more than nine days in the week to Nov. 8. The adjoining gateways for 40% of the nation's containerized imports have handled 17% more volume this year, while their land-side storage capacity remained unchanged.</p> <p>The bottlenecks at West Coast ports are tying up container capacity and underpinning already-soaring rates for transpacific ocean freight. That's pinching margins for companies that import from Asia, like athletic goods giant Adidas AG, which said this week that its freight costs will be almost 200 million euros (\$229 million) higher this year than initially planned.</p> <p>Shipping a 40-foot container of goods from Shanghai to Los Angeles cost \$9,947 this week, down from a record of \$12,424 hit in September but still 145% higher than a year earlier, according to the latest Drewry World Container Index. Freightos, which measures container rates plus premiums and surcharges, shows a 40-foot box commanding \$18,730, a nearly fivefold increase from a year ago.</p> <p>The East Coast is seeing a surge in imports, too. More than 20 container carriers were counted in an anchorage area outside Georgia's Port of Savannah, according to data compiled by Bloomberg.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/13 China threatens Australia w/'heavy attack'
SOURCE	https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-10198037/China-THREATENS-Australia-forces-defend-Taiwan-remarks-Defence-Minister-Peter-Dutton.html
GIST	<p>China has issued a chilling warning to Australians declaring a 'heavy attack' would quickly follow if our forces came to the defence of Taiwan.</p> <p>In explosive comments published in Chinese tabloid The Global Times on Saturday, editor-in-chief Hu Xijin was blunt in his analysis of Australia's promise to come to Taiwan's aid should US allied forces get involved in the conflict.</p> <p>'If Australian troops come to fight in the Taiwan Straits, it is unimaginable that China won't carry out a heavy attack on them and the Australian military facilities that support them,' Mr Xijin tweeted.</p> <p>'So Australia (had) better be prepared to sacrifice for Taiwan island and the US.'</p> <p>The ominous words are believed to be connected to comments made by Australia's Defence Minister Peter Dutton on Friday, where he intimated Aussie troops would step in and help the US if Taiwan was attacked by the global superpower.</p> <p>In the eyes of Mr Dutton, the move would leave Australia in a global position of strength.</p> <p>'(China's) been very clear about their intent to go into Taiwan and we need to make sure that there is a high level of preparedness, a greater sense of deterrence by our capability, and that is how I think we put our country in a position of strength,' he told The Australian.</p> <p>'It would be inconceivable that we wouldn't support the US in an action if the US chose to take that action.'</p> <p>Professor Peter Dean, Chair of Defence Studies and Director of UWA's Defence and Security Institute, told Daily Mail Australia in October war was a real possibility in the region within five or six years.</p> <p>'You certainly can't rule out the potential for the use of force. If the Chinese get to the point where they think they can take Taiwan by force, win and be successful, and they think either that US resolve is lacking or won't be enough, they could be encouraged to risk something really stupid,' he said.</p> <p>'We've seen them be much more risky in recent years under Xi Jinping as he's become more authoritarian.'</p>

But Professor Dean said it is the current so-called 'grey-zone warfare', with China signalling its stance over Taiwan's air defence identification zone (ADIZ), that posed the greatest current risk to world security.

'What the Chinese are really risking here is an incident that comes about by accident or someone gets trigger-happy,' he said.

'The real risk in the region is we don't have any proper, formal mechanisms for de-escalating these things.

'The Chinese are being very adventurous, very coercive, and really raising the levels of risk to levels they really shouldn't be doing.'

The Chinese Communist Party has claimed Taiwan ever since it was established as the Republic of China by the Nationalist Kuomintang under Chiang Kai-shek in 1949, after they fled mainland China during its civil war.

The Republic of China views itself as an autonomous country, while China sees it as a breakaway province.

Diplomatically, western nations such as the US and Australia acknowledge a 'One China' policy which recognises Beijing as the government.

For nations to maintain diplomatic relations with China, it insists they do not formally recognise Taiwan.

Yet the US has sold billions in arms to Taiwan and has repeatedly said it would help defend the island from military threat, despite an official policy of 'strategic ambiguity'.

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HEADLINE	11/13 New Covid variant in France, parts Europe
SOURCE	https://www.ipost.com/health-and-wellness/coronavirus/new-covid-variant-found-in-france-reason-for-panic-or-not-quite-yet-684878
GIST	<p>A new COVID variant identified in a handful of European countries is raising concerns among some health professionals because there are changes to the coronavirus spike protein that have never been seen before.</p> <p>The variant, known either as B.1.X or B.1.640, was first reported by the French paper Le Telegramme after it infected 24 people at a French school in the Brittany region last month. When the variant was discovered in France, the school at which the outbreak occurred was forced to close half of its classes, Le Telegramme reported.</p> <p>Although the situation is now under control and no cases have been found in France since October 26, the French Regional Health Agency said, the variant remains under surveillance.</p> <p>A handful of cases were also discovered in the United Kingdom, Switzerland, Scotland and Italy, although the Delta variant and its descendants continue to be the most dominant strains.</p> <p>Bar-Ilan University Prof. Cyrille Cohen, who is originally from France and regularly interviews and consults with French health officials, explained that the B.1.640 variant has some unprecedented mutations. One in particular has drawn attention: the spike protein, which is what allows the virus to cling to the human cell and start the infection process, has some deletions.</p> <p>The question is whether this will make the virus more or less infectious.</p> <p>The variant is believed to have emanated from Africa, a scenario Cohen said health experts are afraid of and that highlights the need for vaccine equality.</p>

"This variant exemplifies that if you leave some of the world's population without access to vaccines, then the virus will continue to multiply and it will lead to more variants," Cohen said.

A Q4 Global Forecast report published last week by the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) highlighted that while mostly developed countries have successfully vaccinated large swaths of their citizens, most developing countries have made only negligible progress.

The report specifically highlighted the failures of Africa's vaccination drive, where as of late October only 6% of the population in African states is vaccinated against COVID.

"The cause of such low vaccination rates is well-known: Despite recent improvements, global production continues to lag behind demand, with developing countries facing long delays in [accessing vaccines](#)," the EIU report said, adding that the World Health Organization's COVAX program has only managed to ship some 400 million doses globally and that donations from richer countries have been sparse.

Moreover, even if vaccines were delivered, African countries would be challenged in rolling them out, the report said – mainly for logistical reasons.

"Not giving vaccines to these countries may seem OK in the short term," Cohen said, "but in the long term, we might have new variants that are problematic that developed in unvaccinated countries."

"I don't want to frighten people," he said. "There are just a few cases of B.1.640 now and it could very well be that in a month we could all forget about this variant.

"But it is an example of what could happen if there isn't access to vaccines for everyone."

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HEADLINE	11/13 FBI: fake emails part of 'ongoing situation'
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2021/11/13/politics/fbi-fake-emails-cyber-threat/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)The FBI on Saturday said it was aware of reports that unauthorized emails were coming from a legitimate FBI email address to thousands of organizations about a purported cyber threat.</p> <p>The emails -- which according to the agency are part of an "ongoing situation" -- started coming from an FBI address early Saturday and have hit at least 100,000 inboxes, according to the Spamhaus Project, a Europe-based nonprofit that tracks digital threats.</p> <p>One of the fake emails sent from the FBI address, which CNN reviewed, claimed to be a warning from the Department of Homeland Security that the recipient was the target of a "sophisticated" attack. But the actual DHS Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) made no such warning.</p> <p>"The FBI and CISA are aware of the incident this morning involving fake emails from an @ic.fbi.gov email account," the FBI said in a statement. "This is an ongoing situation and we are not able to provide any additional information at this time. The impacted hardware was taken offline quickly upon discovery of the issue. We continue to encourage the public to be cautious of unknown senders and urge you to report suspicious activity to www.ic3.gov or www.cisa.gov."</p> <p>The FBI declined to comment on how the phony emails were sent out using the bureau's IT infrastructure. But cybersecurity analysts are concerned that the fake alert could send organizations into a scramble to address a phantom threat. That might entail diverting resources from where they are needed against actual hacking threats.</p> <p>It's also unclear which types of organizations received the email from the FBI address.</p>

Alex Grosjean, senior threat analyst at Spamhaus, told CNN that whoever perpetrated the scam appeared to be gathering email addresses from organizations that are members of the American Registry for Internet Numbers, a nonprofit that helps manage internet infrastructure. The majority of the nonprofit's members are internet service providers, according to ARIN's website.

ARIN did not immediately respond to CNN's request for comment on Saturday.

Grosjean said he was unaware of any malicious software embedded in the emails. Instead, the emails appear to be a prank to scare the recipients, he said.

The incident also cuts against the work of the FBI and DHS to build trust with non-government organizations and share actionable cyber threat data.

"When someone sees an email from a legitimate FBI account, they're going to stand up and pay attention, right?" said Austin Berglas, former head of the FBI New York Cyber Branch. Taking over an email account, rather than spoofing it, can be more effective in duping victims, said Berglas, currently global head of professional services at BlueVoyant, a cybersecurity services company.

This isn't the first time that scammers have impersonated law enforcement to try to dupe their victims -- though typically it doesn't involve actual FBI email addresses.

In one incident last year, Russian-speaking hackers encrypted the phones of some people in Eastern Europe, accused them of possessing illicit pornographic material and claimed that their personal information had been forwarded to the FBI, according to researchers. The hackers demanded \$500 to unlock the phones.

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HEADLINE	11/13 Prices keep going up: inflation
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2021/11/13/economy/what-is-inflation-explainer/index.html
GIST	<p>New York (CNN Business) Confused about inflation? You're not alone.</p> <p>Inflation is, paradoxically, both incredibly simple to understand and absurdly complicated.</p> <p>Let's start with the simplest version: Inflation happens when prices broadly go up.</p> <p>That "broadly" is important: At any given time, the price of goods will fluctuate based on shifting tastes. Someone makes a viral TikTok about brussels sprouts and suddenly everyone's gotta have them; sprouts prices go up. Meanwhile sellers of cauliflower, last season's trendy veg, are practically giving their goods away. Those fluctuations are constant.</p> <p>Inflation is when the average price of virtually <i>everything</i> consumers buy goes up. Food, houses, cars, clothes, toys, etc. To afford those necessities, wages have to rise too.</p> <p>It's not a bad thing. In the United States, for the past 40 years or so (and particularly this century), we've been living in an ideal low-and-slow level of inflation that comes with a well-oiled consumer-driven economy, with prices going up around 2% a year, if that. Sure, prices on some things, like housing and health care, are much higher than they used to be, but other things, like computers and TVs, have become much cheaper — the average of all the things combined has been relatively stable.</p> <p>Still with me?</p> <p>All right, let's cut to today, and why inflation is all over the news.</p> <p>When 'inflation' is a bad word</p>

[Inflation becomes problematic](#) when that low-and-slow simmer gets fired up to a boil. That's when you hear economists talk about the economy "overheating." For a variety of reasons, largely stemming from the pandemic, the global economy finds itself at a rigorous boil right now.

In the United States, prices have climbed 6.2% — the biggest increase since November 1990, and well above the Federal Reserve's long-term inflation goal of around 2%.

And here's where Econ 101 merges a bit with Psych 101. There's a behavioral economics aspect to inflation where it can become a self-fulfilling prophecy. When prices go up for a long enough period of time, consumers start to anticipate the price increases. You'll buy more goods today if you think they'll cost appreciably more tomorrow. That has the effect of increasing demand, which causes prices to rise even more. And so on. And so on.

That's where it can get especially tricky for the Federal Reserve, whose main job is to control money supply and keep inflation in check.

How'd we get here?

Blame the pandemic.

In the spring of 2020, as Covid-19 spread, it was like pulling the plug on the global economy. Factories around the world shut down; people stopped going out to restaurants; airlines grounded flights. Millions of people were laid off as business disappeared practically overnight. The unemployment rate in America shot up to nearly 15% from about 3.5% in February 2020.

It was the sharpest economic contraction on record.

By early summer, however, demand for consumer goods started to pick back up. Rapidly. Congress and President Joe Biden passed a [historic \\$1.9 trillion stimulus bill](#) in March that made Americans suddenly flush with cash and unemployment assistance. People started shopping again. Demand went from zero to 100, but supply couldn't bounce back so easily.

When you pull the plug on the global economy, you can't just plug it back in and expect it start humming at the same pace as before.

[Take cars](#), for example. Automakers saw the Covid crisis beginning and did what any smart business would do — shut down temporarily and try to mitigate losses. But not long after the pandemic shut factories down, it also drove up demand for cars as people worried about exposure on public transit and avoided flying. Automakers had whiplash.

Cars require an immense number of parts, from an immense number of different factories around the world, to be built by highly skilled laborers in other parts of the world. Getting all of those discreet operations back online takes time, and doing so while keeping workers from getting sick takes even more time.

Economists often describe inflation as too much money chasing too few goods. That's exactly what happened with cars. And houses. And Peloton bikes. And any number of other items that became hot ticket items.

How's the supply chain involved in all this?

"Supply chain bottlenecks" — that's another one you see all over, right?

Let's go back to the car example.

We know that high demand + limited supply = prices go up.

But high demand + limited supply + production delays = prices go up even more.

	<p>All modern cars rely on a variety of computer chips to function. But those chips are also used in cellphones, appliances, TVs, laptops and dozens of other items that, as bad luck would have it, were all in high demand at the same time.</p> <p>That's just one example of the disconnect in the global supply chain. Because new cars have been slow to roll in, used car demand shot through the roof, which drove overall inflation higher. In some cases, car owners were able to sell their used cars for more than what they paid for them a year or two prior.</p> <p>What happens next?</p> <p>Prices and wages are likely to keep going up well into 2022, officials and economists say. But for how long and how much depends on countless variables across the globe.</p> <p>Policymakers' top priority is to unclog the supply chain bottlenecks to get goods moving at their pre-pandemic pace. That's a lot easier said than done. And there's no telling what kind of shocks — a resurgent Covid variant, a massive shipping container getting stuck in a key waterway, a natural disaster — could set back progress.</p> <p>Economists and investors in the United States expect that the Fed will tighten monetary policy by raising interest rates and dialing back emergency stimulus, thereby slow the pace of inflation. When money becomes more expensive to borrow, that can take the heat off price increases and bring the economy back down to that nice, gentle simmer.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/14 Smog chokes New Delhi, air pollution soars
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/smog-chokes-indian-capital-air-pollution-levels-soar-81161614
GIST	<p>NEW DELHI -- Sky obscured by thick, gray smog. Monuments and high-rise buildings swallowed by a blanket of haze. People struggling to breathe.</p> <p>In the Indian capital, it is that time of the year again.</p> <p>The city's air quality index fell into the "very poor" category on Sunday, according to SAFAR, India's main environmental monitoring agency, and in many areas levels of the deadly particulate matter reached around six times the global safety threshold.</p> <p>NASA satellite imagery also showed most of India's northern plains covered by thick haze.</p> <p>Among the many Indian cities gasping for breath, New Delhi tops the list every year. The crisis deepens particularly in the winter when the burning of crop residues in neighboring states coincides with cooler temperatures that trap deadly smoke. That smoke travels to New Delhi, leading to a surge in pollution in the city of more than 20 million people and exacerbating what is already a public health crisis.</p> <p>The New Delhi government on Saturday ordered the closing of schools for a week and construction sites for four days beginning Monday. Government offices were also told to shift to work from home for a week to reduce the number of vehicles on the road.</p> <p>The capital's top elected leader, Arvind Kejriwal, said a complete lockdown of the city was likely but the decision would be taken after consultation with the federal government.</p> <p>India's pollution problems are not limited to the capital.</p> <p>Emissions from industries with no pollution control technology and coal, which helps produce most of the country's electricity, have been linked to the bad air quality in other urban areas.</p>

	<p>India's energy needs are expected to grow faster in the coming decades than in any other country. A part of that demand is expected to be met by dirty coal power, a key source of carbon emissions that pollute the air.</p> <p>That's why on Saturday, India asked for a last-minute change to the final agreement at crucial climate talks in Glasgow, Scotland, calling for the "phase down" not the "phase out" of coal power.</p> <p>Indian Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav argued against a provision on phasing out coal, saying that developing countries were "entitled to the responsible use of fossil fuels."</p> <p>Many experts criticized this move. They worry it has weakened the final agreement and could also hamper India's fight against climate change and worsening air quality.</p> <p>"It is not at all desirable," said Samrat Sengupta, the program director for climate change and energy at the Centre for Science and Environment think tank. But he also said India needed enough "carbon space" in the atmosphere for its developmental needs to coexist with the global ambition of limiting warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) since pre-industrial times.</p> <p>"Phasing out coal is technically impossible at the moment. None of the scenarios can project India will be having zero dependencies on coal by 2050," Sengupta said.</p> <p>Last week, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced that the country would aim to stop adding greenhouse gases to the atmosphere by 2070 — two decades after the U.S., and at least 10 years later than China.</p> <p>India's coal reserves have a high ash content that burns inefficiently and results in increased air pollution. But millions of Indians depend on coal to earn their livelihoods.</p> <p>"In our country, this is the only means of livelihood for many. If the foreign countries say we should stop using coal, then what will we eat," said Hari Ram, a coal trader.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/13 Passenger assaults Southwest employee
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/southwest-employee-hospitalized-assaulted-passenger-airline/story?id=81159451
GIST	<p>A Southwest Airlines employee was verbally and physically assaulted by a female passenger Saturday and had to be transported to a local hospital, according to the airline.</p> <p>The incident took place during the boarding process for flight 4976 that was scheduled to depart from Dallas Love Field Airport and arrive at LaGuardia Airport in New York.</p> <p>The passenger was taken into custody by local law enforcement, the airline said.</p> <p>Southwest said it "maintains a zero-tolerance policy regarding any type of harassment or assault and fully support our employee as we cooperate with local authorities regarding this unacceptable incident."</p> <p>The Federal Aviation Administration said earlier this month it has received more than 5,000 reports from airlines of unruly passengers since the start of the year.</p> <p>Airline crews have reported incidents in which visibly drunk passengers verbally abused, shoved and punched them, kicked seats, threw trash at them and defiled the restrooms.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/12 US Olympians face uncertain road Beijing
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2021/nov/12/travel-trouble-us-olympians-face-uncertain-road-to/

DENVER (AP) — Making an Olympic team is hard enough. This winter, those who earn their spots on the U.S. squad might find it takes even more work to get to Beijing.

Among the slow trickle of information coming out of China in advance of February's Olympics was news that, with virtually no flights operating between North America and China, Olympians very well might have to get to Beijing through a still-undetermined set of connecting flights that could more than double their travel time.

As things stand this month, most of the 250 or so athletes who make the U.S. team will need to take a charter that connects them to Beijing-bound flights scheduled out of four cities, none of which are in North America.

The uncertainty has turned what is already a logistical challenge — getting all these Olympians and their thousands of pounds of equipment to China — into something even more complex. And it has turned what is already an event beset with unprecedented challenges — less freedom of movement, a vaccine mandate and the prospect of competing in a country that is poised to restrict negative coverage, including over widely documented human-rights abuses — into something even more difficult.

“We’re very used to being flexible with our planning and schedule,” U.S. skier Mikaela Shiffrin said in a recent interview with The Associated Press. “But we very rarely don’t have a plan at all. So that is definitely another added source of stress.”

Difficult travel is nothing new for Olympic athletes, and their schedules have only become more jumbled in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic that reshuffled competition schedules and, with New Zealand mostly shut down, made it even harder to find snow during the offseason.

The U.S. Olympic team's sponsor, Delta Airlines, might still be able to arrange charter flights directly from the U.S. to Beijing, but with 11 weeks until the start of the Games, everything is still up in the air.

As of this week, approved flights into Beijing are expected to depart from Tokyo, Seoul, Hong Kong and Paris. The U.S. ski and snowboard team's tentative plan is to charter flights from Los Angeles to one of the points in Asia, then switch to Olympic charters. Further complicating the issue is that some of these athletes are in Europe for the World Cup season. Without normal commercial options available, the task of moving them around is more difficult.

The U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Committee is ultimately in charge of getting the ski team and the rest of the U.S. teams, outside of hockey, to Beijing. With an extra connection through Asia, or a stop in Europe, travel times could be around double what would normally be a 12-hour journey from the U.S. West Coast to Beijing.

Rick Adams, the USOPC's chief of sport performance, said everyone was aware that the quick turnaround after the Tokyo Olympics and the COVID-19 protocols “would make planning for Beijing very complex.”

“That said, we pride ourselves on being the best prepared NOC and NPC in the world, and we are exploring all options to get our Olympic and Paralympic athletes — as well as support staff — to the Games safely and efficiently,” he said.

Athletes aren't the only group being impacted by China's rulemaking in advance of the Olympics.

The Foreign Correspondents Club of China put out a statement this month complaining of “lack of transparency” from the Beijing Organizing Committee and the IOC with regards to Olympic-related reporting in China.

The organizing committee told China's Xinhua news agency that it plans on increasing credentials for test events and is assigning staff to manage interview requests and inquiries. The committee said it does not recognize the FCCC.

	<p>Most journalists and Olympic support staff also have been on hold in making their travel plans.</p> <p>Much of the travel confusion stems from U.S. and Chinese carriers' decisions to reduce the number of flights between the countries from more than 300 a week to single digits. The rollbacks started when demand dropped off sharply in the wake of early COVID-19 outbreaks. The reinstatement of the flights was slowed because of diplomatic wrangling between the countries, along with strict quarantine rules that make travel to either place difficult. Just this week did the U.S. reopen travel to some foreign visitors who can show proof of vaccination.</p> <p>The U.S. athletes are now collateral damage in this, as the USOPC negotiates with Delta for charter flights that are expected to cost well into six figures.</p> <p>Though the extremely limited number of flights between America and China is unique, the U.S. isn't the only one dealing with an unprecedented amount of uncertainty this close to the Games. A recent search of the Air Canada website offered at least one option for flights between Vancouver and Beijing (with a stop in Shanghai), where similar searches of Delta and United websites offered none between the U.S. and Beijing.</p> <p>"Planning for these Games has been challenging due to COVID-19, but we experienced similar issues during our planning for Tokyo," Canadian Olympic Committee CEO David Shoemaker said. "We have no reason to believe that we will have any trouble getting Team Canada to the Games on time and ready to compete."</p>
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HEADLINE	11/13 Iran, Saudi Arabia engage in meetings, talks
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2021/nov/13/tehran-and-riyadh-are-talking-bad-blood-remains-be/
GIST	<p>Bitter rivals Saudi Arabia and Iran have engaged in a growing number of back-channel and public diplomatic meetings during recent months, but U.S. sources and regional experts say tension continues to soar between Riyadh and Tehran.</p> <p>While the Sunni Muslim monarchy in Saudi Arabia has eased a once-impregnable diplomatic blockade of the Shiite-dominated theocracy in Iran, the two oil-rich Middle East powers remain locked in a proxy war in Yemen and divided over Tehran's backing of militias blamed for destabilizing Iraq.</p> <p>The Saudis, who lost an unflinching supporter in Washington with the defeat of former President Donald Trump, have spent the past year scrambling to reorient their regional posture in response to the Biden administration's more ambiguous Mideast policy. The kingdom is particularly wary of President Biden's push to revive the 2015 Iran nuclear deal — a development likely to result in major sanctions relief for Tehran and a surge of cash and weapons for Iranian allies across the region.</p> <p>Talks toward reviving the deal that former Mr. Trump repudiated in 2018 are slated to resume Nov. 29 in Vienna, with Iranian officials recently signaling they'll meet directly with their U.S. counterparts for the first time since Mr. Biden took office.</p> <p>But even as debate swirls around the nuclear talks, there has been an unexpected thaw in Saudi-Iranian relations, with Iranian officials even contending that discussions with the Saudis were "on the right track" following a September meeting in Baghdad. For Iran, the talks are a way to ease a near-united hostile front among Gulf Arab powers over its regional ambitions. For the Saudis, the talks are a way to hedge some bets as Mr. Biden brings into question U.S. commitment to the region and Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, an Iranian ally, appears to be consolidating power once again in Damascus.</p> <p>"We have achieved results and agreements, but we still need more dialogue," Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian told reporters when asked about the direct talks with the Saudis, according to Agence France-Presse.</p>

To date, Saudi and Iranian officials have held four rounds of talks in Iraq, which with sizable Shiite and Sunni populations has been especially anxious to bring the two regional powers together, in addition to a meeting on the sidelines of the U.N. General Assembly gathering in New York in September.

But details remain scarce and the talks have not kept bilateral tensions from soaring on repeated occasions. Saudi Arabia severed diplomatic ties with Iran in 2016 after protesters attacked the Saudi embassy in Tehran in retaliation for the kingdom's execution at the time of a prominent Shiite cleric.

"The Saudis and the Iranians are having backchannel diplomatic meetings, but this has not changed the current situation of tension and competition," says Hussain Abdul-Hussain, a Middle East expert with the Foundation for Defense of Democracies. "These meetings are not connected to any structural position or policy developments. They are more maneuvers that each side is using in different ways."

Pushing a false narrative

Mr. Abdul-Hussain said in an interview that Iranian leaders are trying to characterize the talks as a sign that Saudi Arabia is seeking to accommodate a rising Iran, effectively accepting Tehran as a regional power whose influence is growing despite U.S. and Israeli attempts to contain it. Iran has been far more willing to acknowledge the talks have taken place than have the Saudis.

"Whenever the Iranians say they're hanging out with the Saudis, their tone is one of, 'Hear ye, hear ye, the Saudis have conceded to us. Anyone who still thinks it's wise to stand up to Iran better change their mind because even the Saudis have come crawling,'" he said.

Others say the more ambivalent recent U.S. support for the Saudis under Mr. Biden — a product of the U.S. administration's desire to focus on China and its criticisms of key Saudi foreign policy and domestic initiatives under de facto leader Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman — has made the Saudi leadership more willing to talk with the Iranian regime. Jennifer Gavito, deputy assistant secretary for Iran and Iraq at the State Department's Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, told CNBC in an interview last month that the U.S. supported direct talks.

"We welcome any direct talks that lead to greater peace and stability in the region," Ms. Gavito said.

While Washington under Mr. Trump backed a messy Saudi bombing campaign against Iran-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen, Mr. Biden formally ended the support in February. The Biden administration also removed the Houthis from the State Department's Foreign Terrorist Organizations list — a move widely seen as an attempt to entice Iran into rejoining nuclear talks with Washington.

Riyadh was outraged by the move, which came amid Houthi attacks on targets inside Saudi Arabia. Over the past six years, the Tehran-backed rebels have targeted military installations and critical oil infrastructure in the kingdom, while defying an intense bombing campaign led by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates in support of Yemen's previous leadership.

The Houthis and the Iranians have also been accused of going after airports. In August, Riyadh blamed the Houthis for flying a bomb-laden drone into an airport in southwestern Saudi Arabia, a strike that wounded eight people.

A high-level U.S. national security source in contact with individuals directly involved in the Saudi-Iran talks, said the Saudis and other Persian Gulf states, including the UAE, are eager to "lower the temperature" with Tehran.

"The Saudis are trying to lower the likelihood that Iran will conduct additional drone and terror attacks against the kingdom," said the source, adding that Riyadh is also pursuing talks because the U.S. and the international community are unwilling to truly confront Iran over its backing of militant proxies such as the Houthis and Lebanon's powerful Hezbollah movement.

Frustration over such backing triggered a new regional diplomatic spat in late October, with Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain and Kuwait all pulling their ambassadors from Lebanon, which has fallen increasingly under the control of Hezbollah.

The four Gulf Arab powers acted in response to comments by a Hezbollah-aligned Lebanese minister who had publicly criticized the Saudi-led military campaign in Yemen.

Hezbollah is listed by Washington as a terrorist organization, and the Saudis accuse the group of helping the Houthis in Yemen. The Associated Press has noted that both groups have strong ties to Iran, and consider themselves part of the so-called axis of resistance that includes the Syrian government and powerful Shiite militias in Iraq.

Chance for Detente?

Abdulaziz Sager, who heads the Gulf Research Center, and former senior Iranian diplomat Hossein Mousavian have argued that both Iran and Saudi Arabia perceive the other to be keen on dominating the region.

“Riyadh views Iran as intent on encircling the kingdom with its allied non-state actors; Tehran views Riyadh as a key facilitator of U.S. efforts to contain and undermine the Islamic Republic,” Mr. Sager and Mr. Mousavian wrote in a commentary published early this year by British newspaper The Guardian.

“Riyadh considers Iran’s ballistic missile arsenal to be a threat to its national security, especially its critical infrastructure. Tehran regards the kingdom’s purchase of large quantities of sophisticated Western arms as exacerbating the conventional weapons asymmetry in the region,” they wrote, adding that “Riyadh charges Iran with interfering in the internal affairs of sovereign states such as Yemen, Syria, Lebanon, Bahrain and Iraq,” while “Tehran sees Saudi Arabia doing the same in these very countries.”

“We remain at the mercy of a single miscalculation that could turn the protracted cold war between our states hot, potentially ushering in disastrous consequences for the entire region,” Mr. Sager and Mr. Mousavian wrote, arguing that the arrival of a new administration in Washington offered a chance to “move from confrontation to dialogue.”

But the prospect of a serious Saudi-Iran rapprochement remains dim.

“It’s possible you could have restoration of diplomatic relations, but in no way should this be confused with the Gulf changing its views on Iran in the region or Iran changing its ambitions in the region,” said the high-level national security source who spoke on condition of anonymity with The Times. “It’s a profound error if anyone thinks otherwise.”

Daniel Roth, research director at the bipartisan advocacy group United Against Nuclear Iran, also argues there is “no way there’s going to be a thaw anytime soon.”

“The Iranians are literally funding terrorists who’ve recently carried out attacks inside Saudi Arabia,” Mr. Roth said in a recent interview. “Iran is always trying to push the idea of a Saudi-Iran detente, like a kind of ... brotherhood or joining together as enemies against the United States, but I think the Saudis know [better].”

Said Mr. Abdul-Hussain, “The Iranians are also always telling everyone that, ‘America will be leaving the region sooner or later, but we will still be here.’ In other words, ‘Don’t bet on America to have your back.’”

The catch, he said, is that “the Saudis are not crawling to the Iranians,” and while the Saudis may agree the U.S. is withdrawing, Riyadh remains deeply suspicious of Iran’s intentions. “If anything, the perspective

	<p>that the Americans are leaving is actually pushing the Saudis to embrace the idea of a regional coalition that can stand up to Iran.”</p> <p>Such sentiment, Mr. Abdul-Hussain added, may ultimately motivate closer relations between Saudi Arabia and Israel, the sworn enemy of Iran.</p> <p>But Riyadh has resisted joining the historic “Abraham Accord” diplomatic normalizations that other Gulf Arab powers — most notably the Emiratis and Bahrainis — have recently embraced with Israel. And, some in the region believe talk between the Saudis and the Iranians is a necessity to reduce the prospect of a major war between the bitter rivals.</p> <p>“At the very least, an incremental process of detente might lower political and strategic temperatures in the Gulf while winning a measure of support from Western leaders,” Daniel Brumberg, a senior fellow with the Arab Center in Washington, argued in a commentary published by the think tank last month.</p> <p>“Detente,” Mr. Brumberg wrote, “is more about managing rather than transcending conflicts.”</p>
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HEADLINE	11/11 Thousands Afghan children public schools
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/afghan-refugees-students-school/2021/11/11/35d3f230-3db2-11ec-bfad-8283439871ec_story.html
GIST	<p>The first students in what is expected to be many thousands of Afghan refugees have begun arriving in the nation’s schools, as educators and community groups around the country prepare to help with language classes, family support and trauma counseling.</p> <p>Nearly 53,000 Afghan evacuees still remain on eight military installations around the country — almost half of them 18 or under. Some are learning English but formal education in bricks-and-mortar schools typically comes with resettlement.</p> <p>In Virginia, nearly 180 students have enrolled this fall in the public schools of Fairfax County, while 50 refugee children in Texas have started classes in Austin and 65 in California have started in Fremont.</p> <p>Thousands of others will follow them as they move off military bases and into communities across the country. Some families may look to settle near relatives or friends, while others seek the best opportunities for jobs and housing.</p> <p>“In the next few months, you will see the vast majority of families leave the military bases, reach their final destinations and have their children enrolled in public schools,” said Krish O’Mara Vignarajah, chief executive of Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service.</p> <p>School district leaders in several areas of the country say they are ready for the influx and have long experience in welcoming refugees. Some are working with resettlement agencies and community organizations to ease the transition.</p> <p>On Friday in Fairfax County, Abdul Wahid Qanit and his family made their way to a school registration center in Dunn Loring — more than two months after they left Kabul. The journey took them to an Air Force base in New Mexico for 38 days. They have been in Virginia since mid-October.</p> <p>“Now we are here, we are happy,” said Aysha Qanit, 14, as she and her brothers waited for their parents to complete school system paperwork. “We are so excited — and a little nervous.”</p> <p>Elsewhere in Fairfax, some children had already started classes. At Dogwood Elementary in Reston, Afghan refugees this year are paired as much as possible with classmates who speak their language, said Principal Kate Beckner.</p>

Her newcomers from Afghanistan have gaps in their education, she said, because their families faced threats for working with the Army. When they did attend school, the setting was outdoors and “not a positive place,” she said. At first, “the kids were afraid to come to school” at Dogwood, she said.

But several weeks in, they are proud to have learned phrases in English. Every day, she said, they walk into the classroom calling out “Hi!” and “Good morning!”

At Annandale High, students came up with a buddy system to help newcomers adjust and navigate the school of 2,200 students. There is so much to get to know, said Sosan Barakzai, 15, who came to the United States from Afghanistan in fifth grade.

She and others who settled in the United States before the new arrivals say they would have liked to hear from students like themselves about how to follow class schedules and get around the school, how to ride the bus, which foods are halal, how course credits work, what is needed for graduation.

“Anything they have questions with, we want to make them feel comfortable,” Barakzai said.

Refugee children often suffer from trauma and can have greater needs in language learning, family communication, academic intervention and social-emotional support. Their families often arrive with little in hand to stake out a new life, anxious about housing, jobs and food. They worry about relatives left behind.

“None of that is new to schools,” said Kevin Welner, a professor at the University of Colorado at Boulder and director of the National Education Policy Center. “Soon after public schools began serving children in this country, there were waves of refugees that public schools were asked to educate and provide additional services for.”

Still, funding is complex. Because of a lag in budget cycles, refugees arrive in school systems that have not yet been funded to serve them, said Bruce Baker, a professor in the Graduate School of Education at Rutgers University. Often educators scramble to adjust.

If refugees stay, they are counted with other students in funding formulas that vary by state. Schools may get extra resources for refugees who fall into certain categories — as English-language learners, students with special needs or children from low-income families. Sometimes grants or other supplements benefit refugees.

Julie Sugarman, a senior policy analyst at the Migration Policy Institute, a D.C. think tank, said many schools do well, trying to give refugees all they need, but others lack sufficient resources or well-trained teachers. “There’s still a ways to go for some,” she said.

The U.S. Supreme Court long ago decided that children cannot be denied a free public education because of their immigration status.

But since the chaotic departure of the U.S. military from Afghanistan — with its wrenching images of crowds at the airport, desperate to leave — the public reaction has been strong. “It really does seem like people are excited and really want to help,” Sugarman said.

In Virginia, a coalition of more than 100 volunteers — including some military veterans of Afghanistan — have banded together to help Afghan families get furniture, find apartments, travel to medical appointments and make new lives. They call themselves NoVA RAFT (Northern Virginia Resettling Afghan Families Together).

“We said, we know people are coming — a lot of them — so how can we get ready for them?” said Dan Altman, a co-founder who worked for more than a decade in the country, mostly for the U.S. Agency for International Development.

In Wisconsin, 17-year-old Kyle Luchsinger said he does not want the refugees to think the world has forgotten them.

He and eight other students at rural Ellsworth High School are raising money for school supplies for children at Fort McCoy, two hours away, where 11,600 Afghan refugees are housed. So far, they have collected \$8,600, through a website and traditional donations; they plan to buy supplies wholesale and hope to deliver them in December.

They got the idea from social studies teacher Ryan Casper, who mentioned that the school had collected supplies for kids in Afghanistan while he served there with the Army.

“We kind of ran with it,” said Payton Langer, 17. “We just wanted to help as much as possible.”

Their teacher thinks of it as a favor returned.

“Many of these Afghan refugees were helping the U.S. or helping the military,” said Casper, a lieutenant colonel in the Army Reserve. “It was a humanitarian gesture to do something to help their children while they are adjusting.”

Some educators try to ease the way.

At Travis Heights Elementary in Austin, second-grade teacher Shayna Bright has a journal of collected words in Pashto and Dari, the languages of her Afghan students. The journal dates back to previous school years.

She has it out again.

“They get really excited, being able to teach me something,” she said. “When they know I care about them as a person, not just a learner, they’re more excited to be in the classroom with me and willing to be engaged. They feel included.”

Of the 350 students from Afghanistan in the Austin Independent School District, 58 are refugees who have come this school year.

Salimah Shamsuddin, refugee family support coordinator, said the district foresaw the coming stream of refugees as the Taliban began to take over.

Her office went into high gear, holding staff trainings that focused on Afghan culture, ways to support students, and referrals of those with signs of trauma to culturally competent mental health providers.

It also helps, she said, that the school system has a refugee family support services office and an international high school program designed for students spending their first two years in the United States.

The refugee experience is all encompassing.

Shamsuddin recalls a teenager who had no idea what to choose in her Texas school cafeteria. So she did not eat — not until a parent support specialist noticed it and ultimately her father walked her through the cafeteria, encouraging her to try certain foods.

“Although our menus in school have gotten better, it’s still so different from what they’re used to, which is rice and kebabs and eggplant and lentils,” Shamsuddin said.

At Templeton Elementary in Maryland, Principal Ebony Harris says her school also tunes in to the range of needs refugees have. Her student body includes more than 150 students from Afghanistan, including 40 refugees who have arrived since January.

The school in Prince George's County makes space when Muslim students want to pray during religious holidays and celebrates their culture — and others — in a school where 26 languages are spoken and 30 countries are represented.

But Harris and Assistant Principal Amy Robinson say refugees who evacuated as the U.S. military departed are not yet enrolled.

“We’re just waiting to see when we’re going to get more students,” Harris said. “We know we’re going to get them, but the question is when.”

In California, the Fremont Unified School District, which has welcomed 65 Afghan refugees this school year, is working with community organizations to prepare for more.

The district has contracted for more language translation services. It has a program for newcomers. Its schools have room.

“We’re trying to have as many tools available for the students, and it’s really feeling like a community effort of people coming forward to support Fremont and incoming students,” said Leticia Salinas, assistant superintendent of instructional services.

Interestingly, the coronavirus pandemic may have made it easier to accommodate newcomers because federal and state emergency relief funding to help schools return to in-person learning gives the district more staff to work with as refugees arrive.

Fremont has hired more counselors, psychologists and family liaisons.

“Two years ago, we perhaps would not have what we have now,” said Salinas.

In the Sacramento City Unified School District, the extra funding has also made a difference.

Victoria Flores, director of student support and health services, said the journey to the United States can be traumatic but, beyond that, it is daunting to attend school in a place where the language and customs are unfamiliar.

“The one thing we have learned,” she said, “is kind of just being open-arms — really assessing what are the needs, and just being open-minded and openhearted.”

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HEADLINE	11/12 Businesses' new reality: multiple options
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/12/business/corner-office-return.html
GIST	<p>People think about the office differently now — including the C.E.O.s who for so long kept a watchful eye on which workers were at their desks.</p> <p>Bosses who once relished face time have grown less attached to crowded elevators and overstuffed conference rooms. Executives who got promoted by putting in 15-hour days sitting in Aeron chairs under fluorescent lighting now accept that the workday can sometimes end at 3 p.m. or 11 p.m., depending on what is best for the employee. And C.E.O.s eager to attract young workers are adapting to changing norms, and realizing how nice more flexibility would have been earlier in their careers, when they had young children.</p> <p>And yet, after careers spent climbing the corporate ladder, many C.E.O.s can't help but pine for the office, too.</p>

“I do miss meetings in which you can stand up and go to the whiteboard and draw what you’re thinking and have others look at it,” said Sundar Pichai, the chief executive of Google and its parent company, Alphabet.

Across the country, employers are struggling with how, when and even if they will bring employees back to the office. In conversations with leaders at companies in a broad variety of industries — the people charged with making the ultimate call — the consensus was that there was no consensus.

C.E.O.s are struggling to balance rapidly shifting expectations with their own impulse to have the final word on how their companies run. They are eager to appear responsive to employees who are relishing their newfound autonomy, but reluctant to give up too much control. And they are constantly changing policies in response to worker demands, re-examining aspects of their business that they might not have tinkered with otherwise.

“Preferences are changing during this pandemic,” said Tim Ryan, the U.S. chairman of PwC, the accounting and consulting firm, which announced that it would let its U.S. workers work remotely forever. “We knew that there’s a segment of our people who would like not just to work flexibly, which we already had in place, but to work completely virtually.”

The diverging approaches — and priorities — are on display less than a mile away from each other, in Chicago.

Late this summer, Upwork, a technology company that matches freelancers with jobs, welcomed employees back to its downtown office after more than a year of pandemic-induced slumber. Weeks later, with concerns about the Delta variant of the coronavirus mounting, Upwork’s chief executive, Hayden Brown, decided to shut the office once again.

“We didn’t over-agonize over it,” Ms. Brown said. “It was kind of the prudent thing to do.”

Just a few blocks from the Upwork office, the headquarters of Harrison Street, a private real estate investment firm with \$40 billion under management, have been bustling for months. The company allowed employees back on a voluntary basis last year and called all its employees back, five days a week, after Labor Day.

“We take our responsibility and the money we manage very, very seriously,” said Chris Merrill, a co-founder and the chief executive of Harrison Street. “And we’re going to be able to do a better job if we’re together. There’s just no doubt about it.”

Many factors are influencing this profound reordering of the work force and office life. After a year and a half spent logging on from their bedrooms or spare rooms, many white-collar workers have grown accustomed to their newfound flexibility. Companies are reassessing the need for — and the costs associated with — large offices, especially as business has remained strong and the markets have remained buoyant even with so few workers at their desks. And in recent months, the tight labor market has given employees the upper hand in setting the terms of how, and where, they do their work.

By this summer, PwC had already taken several steps to accommodate its 40,000 client-facing employees in the United States, who had been working remotely for over a year. Meetings were reduced by 25 percent. Video meetings were banned on Fridays, and many people could stop working at noon that day to get an early start on the weekend.

Then in early October, PwC announced that remote work was a permanent option. Workers had two weeks to decide what they would do. Those who decide to change cities or remain remote may have their assignments changed, but are not at risk of being let go.

It is a shift that Mr. Ryan said he believed other companies would be making in the months and years ahead.

“C.E.O.s are now just beginning to realize that if you’re employing thousands and thousands and thousands of people, you need to have multiple options,” Mr. Ryan said. “I believe what we announced will be commonplace for the mass employers in a matter of months. It’s just catching up with how fast the world is moving.”

What Workers Want

Liz Fraser’s first day as chief executive of Kate Spade, the fashion brand owned by Tapestry, was March 2, 2020. Less than two weeks later, much of the world had shut down.

For months, Ms. Fraser scrambled to keep the business afloat while also trying to connect with her new colleagues. “My hardest point was like six months in,” she said. “I was like, ‘Oh, I still don’t know anybody.’”

After countless hours on Zoom calls, Ms. Fraser said, she finally felt she had gotten to know most of her close associates. Yet on a recent Friday, she was still working from her home in Brooklyn and celebrating Halloween on Zoom with colleagues, while the Kate Spade offices in Midtown Manhattan remained mostly empty.

If there is a lack of urgency to return to the office, that is largely because Kate Spade employees seem to prefer working from home.

“We’ve kind of worked around everybody’s needs,” Ms. Fraser said. “You know, let’s just be flexible. From a professional perspective, but also from a personal perspective, what do they need to make this strange time work?”

At Upwork, too, employees are helping to shape company policies and determine the future of their shared office life.

“I think they do have more power now,” Ms. Brown said. “Companies are listening to their employees more than ever before, and I think that’s partly because the war for talent is greater than ever.”

Even IBM, which for much of the 20th century had a reputation for a formal office culture where men were expected to wear suits and ties every day, is among the companies that are essentially letting employees set the terms of how and when they do their work.

Arvind Krishna, the chief executive of IBM, said he no longer cared whether office workers showed up at 5 a.m. or 11 a.m., or whether their workday ended at 3 p.m. or 9 p.m., so long as they were productive.

“Why should I, as an employer, care as long as you can get the work done and you’re highly productive?” he asked. “I should not try to be overly dictatorial about that.”

The broad deference to employees is a stark change for corporate America. For decades, workers put in [longer hours](#) and extra days, working, on average, an additional full month more per year than in 1980, according to the Pew Research Center. Given that, and the fact that wages have not kept up with increases in productivity, perhaps it’s not surprising that employees are eager to keep working from home, reclaiming some measure of independence.

“What employees are saying they want in their work environment going forward is going to be a lot more important than a bunch of senior executives at the top of an organization determining what that will be,” said [Andi Owen](#), the chief executive of MillerKnoll, the maker of the Aeron chair and other office furniture, which has yet to bring all of its own white-collar workers back full time.

It was input from Upwork employees that left Ms. Brown with no hesitation about re-closing the Chicago office, or with permanently shutting down the company’s former headquarters in Silicon Valley earlier in the pandemic.

“We basically just listened to the work force, and everybody said remote work was working really well,” she said. This month, Upwork reopened its Chicago office a second time to workers who want to go in.

Being Present

For Mr. Merrill of Harrison Street, the romanticization of remote work is balderdash.

“Being in the office makes sense,” he said. “It’s very, very important for the younger people to be together. That is where they learn. That is where they grow. That is where you’re going to create upward mobility.”

Mr. Merrill said there was no chance he could have gained the experience needed to start a successful firm if he had spent his early career working from home.

“My learning was sitting in my boss’s office and listening to a call, or sitting in on a meeting, or bumping into someone in the lunchroom,” he said. “It’s very important to get the younger employees in the office, collaborating and working hard.”

Mr. Pichai said that Google, where some workers have returned on a voluntary basis but most are still working remotely, remained productive (and profitable), but that going so long with limited in-person interactions with colleagues was getting old.

“We are working on some borrowed time, in terms of working on memories of the relationships you have and the connections you have,” Mr. Pichai said. “It’s taking a toll.”

As Google prepares for more employees to come back to the office next year, it is planning a makeover of many of its office spaces. They will feature modular furniture that can be easily rearranged and privacy robots capable of inflating balloon walls to create temporary rooms.

IBM, too, is eyeing a day when more of its workers are back in the office, collaborating together. “For a certain kind of work, let me call it creative work, as well as decision making, it is much easier and faster to do it when you are together,” Mr. Krishna said.

At companies where some workers remain remote while others show up in person, the rift between who’s in the office and who isn’t could have an impact on who is promoted to leadership roles, Mr. Krishna said.

“If you’re satisfied that the work you’re going to do is of an individual nature, you can do that remotely,” he said. “If the work you want to do is leadership, you have to spend some time in the office.”

And Ms. Owen of MillerKnoll warns that workers who resist going back to the office could find themselves isolated and at a disadvantage.

“One of my biggest worries is that we’re going to have remote orphans,” she said. “Walking down the hall to somebody’s office and knocking on the door, or doing a drive-by versus setting up a video appointment, these things are easier to do in person.”

For Mr. Merrill of Harrison Street, Zoom is simply no substitute for working alongside colleagues and partners.

“Personal interactions are what this is all about,” he said. “Being empathetic, being able to look someone in the eye and shake someone’s hand, just listening and sitting in people’s offices and bumping into somebody in the lunchroom and sharing an idea — that just doesn’t happen over Zoom.”

Always On

While many office workers are still doing their jobs from home and enjoying newfound leverage with their employers, in some ways Americans are working harder than ever.

A full third of workers said last fall that they were putting in more hours than they had been before the pandemic, according to Pew. This was especially the case for people who used to commute. For many, the hours spent driving or taking public transportation had simply been subsumed into the workday.

“The work is not just happening in the workplace,” Mr. Pichai said. “It’s no longer defined by when it happens.”

Parents, too, have struggled to work from home with children around. Forty percent of working mothers said it had gotten harder to balance work and family responsibilities. And younger workers in particular said that even as expectations remained high, it was exceedingly difficult to stay focused and on task while working from home.

“I don’t necessarily buy into the mythology of people who are just working part time and hanging out in their beds, doing nothing,” said Ms. Owen of MillerKnoll. “I think people are working harder.”

The blurring of the lines between the workday and the rest of life has contributed to a growing sense of disaffection in the labor force, and may help explain the mass resignations that are upending the job market. A record 4.3 million Americans quit their jobs in August.

Yet with remote work likely to persist for at least two years for some office dwellers, and with smartphones, Slack, email and Zoom making it possible to work anywhere at any time, the boundary between one’s professional life and personal life is getting blurrier than ever.

“We have done a social experiment over the last 18 months,” said Mr. Krishna of IBM. “The world where the clock tower rings and everybody goes to work, then the clock tower rings and then you all go back home — that’s over.”

A Hybrid Future

As PwC looks to a future when many of its employees may be working from home indefinitely, Mr. Ryan is hoping to create an environment where remote work is not viewed as being inferior to showing up in the office.

“There’s almost an inherent bias it’s negative,” he said of the impact on remote workers. “What happens if that’s the positive?”

If all the details aren’t sorted out yet, that’s OK with Mr. Ryan. He is moving fast in hopes of staying ahead of what he believes is a tectonic shift in how people work.

“What worries me the most is being the frog in the pot,” he said. “That’s why we did this. Worst case, it doesn’t work out. I’m OK with that. We’ll fix it.”

Ms. Fraser of Kate Spade is also trying to embrace a future where key employees might live thousands of miles away.

“I don’t even necessarily care where you live, as long as you have the flexibility to come to New York as needed,” she said. “You can live wherever.”

Ms. Fraser, who has worked relentlessly for years now and has an 18-year-old daughter, said she wished she’d had more opportunities to work remotely earlier in her career.

“It would have been a game changer for me to have had a little bit more flexibility so that I could take my meetings from home in the afternoon,” she said. “I definitely traveled a lot and I worked really hard, and I wanted to. I don’t regret it. But there’s no such thing as quality time. There’s just time.”

Whether the future is all remote, back in the office or somewhere in between, what is clear is that office work for many is unlikely to resemble what it was in the past. Employees may be in the office only a few days a week, if at all. Their manager may live in another state. It might be months or even years before colleagues who speak every day ever meet in person. And to hear many C.E.O.s tell it, that's all OK.

"So many executives are holding on to remnants of the past and assuming that was normal," said Ms. Owen of MillerKnoll. "The world is evolving. We changed as a society, and we changed what we know we can do."

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HEADLINE	11/13 New Mexico 3rd state boosters for all adults
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/11/13/world/covid-vaccine-boosters-mandate?type=stylIn-live-updates&label=coronavirus%20updates&index=0#new-mexico-becomes-third-state-to-approve-covid-boosters-for-all-adults
GIST	<p>New Mexico became the third state to expand eligibility for booster shots to all adults over the weekend as the state faces "a significant surge in new Covid-19 infections" with the continued spread of the Delta variant of the coronavirus, said an executive order issued by the governor.</p> <p>The state has seen rising levels of infections and hospitalizations for weeks.</p> <p>Colorado and California had moved this week to expand eligibility to all adults, going beyond federal government guidelines prioritizing the additional shot for older adults and population groups considered most at risk of exposure or severe illness.</p> <p>Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham issued the order Friday, authorizing booster shots for New Mexico residents who are 18 and older and received the Johnson & Johnson vaccine more than two months ago or the second shot of either the Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna vaccines more than six months ago.</p> <p>"I strongly encourage every New Mexican to register for a booster today," Governor Lujan Grisham said in a statement.</p> <p>The governor also extended a mask-wearing requirement for indoor public spaces until at least Dec. 10, the statement said.</p> <p>Although there has been debate among experts on whether Covid-19 vaccine boosters are widely needed, Pfizer and BioNTech asked the Food and Drug Administration this week to authorize their third shot for people 18 and older. The F.D.A. has already authorized the Johnson & Johnson booster for all adults who were inoculated with the one-dose vaccine.</p> <p>Under federal recommendations, those eligible for the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna boosters are people who are 65 and older and adults 18 and older who live in long-term care settings, have certain underlying medical conditions that put them at higher risk of severe illness, or who work or live in high-risk settings. Those boosters would need to be administered at least six months after they had completed their vaccination series.</p> <p>The states that have expanded eligibility have cited their own priorities for doing so.</p> <p>In Colorado, Gov. Jared Polis expressed concern about the pervasive spread of the coronavirus in a part of the country that has continued to see a spike in infections. In California, Dr. Tomás J. Aragón, the state's public health director, said patients should be able "to self-determine their risk of exposure." In New Mexico, Dr. David R. Scrase, acting secretary for the Department of Health, said "hospitals are well beyond capacity" in the latest wave of infections and disease.</p>

	“Providing boosters for adults will significantly increase levels of immunity protection across our state — and that’s essential for all of us,” Dr. Scrase said in a statement . He added that Covid “is incredibly opportunistic — and it’s our job to ensure that the virus has fewer and fewer opportunities to spread.”
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HEADLINE	11/13 School nurses battle Covid, angry parents
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/13/health/coronavirus-school-nurses.html
GIST	<p>When a junior high school student in western Oregon tested positive for the coronavirus last month, Sherry McIntyre, a school nurse, quarantined two dozen of the student’s football teammates. The players had spent time together in the locker room unmasked, and, according to local guidelines, they could not return to school for at least 10 days.</p> <p>Some parents took the news poorly. They told Ms. McIntyre that she should lose her nursing license or accused her of violating their children’s educational rights. Another nurse in the district faced similar ire when she quarantined the volleyball team. This fall, after facing repeated hostility from parents, they started locking their office doors.</p> <p>“They call us and tell us we’re ruining their children’s athletic career,” Ms. McIntyre said. “They see us as the enemy.”</p> <p>Throughout the pandemic, schools have been flash points, the source of heated debates over the threat the virus poses and the best way to combat it. School nurses are on the front lines. They play a crucial role in keeping schools open and students safe but have found themselves under fire for enforcing public health rules that they did not make and cannot change.</p> <p>This new academic year has been the hardest yet, they say. After a year of remote or hybrid learning, schools generally reopened at full capacity; many did so in the middle of the Delta surge and in the midst of an escalating political battle over “parents’ rights” to shape what happens in schools.</p> <p>Although 12- to 15-year-olds have been eligible for vaccination since May, uptake has been slow; just 48 percent of children in that age group have been fully vaccinated, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.</p> <p>The vast majority of elementary school students, who became eligible for the shots just two weeks ago, remain unvaccinated.</p> <p>Nurses say they are juggling more Covid cases and quarantines — and more furious parents — than ever. “I call myself a fireman and a dentist, because I feel like I’m putting out fires and pulling teeth all day long,” said Holly Giovi, a school nurse in Deer Park, N.Y.</p> <p>They are, they say, exhausted and overwhelmed. Some say that, for the first time, they hate their jobs, while others are quitting, exacerbating a school nursing shortage that predated the pandemic.</p> <p>“I loved being a school nurse before Covid,” Ms. McIntyre said. Last month, she resigned.</p> <p>‘More than Band-Aids and booboos’</p> <p>Even before the pandemic hit, the job of a school nurse extended far beyond tending to playground scrapes.</p> <p>School nurses manage chronic conditions, like diabetes and seizure disorders; perform vision, hearing and scoliosis screenings; ensure that students are up-to-date on vaccinations and physicals; assist with the development of personalized educational plans for students with disabilities; help students manage stress and anxiety, and more.</p> <p>“You’re doing a lot more than Band-Aids and booboos,” Ms. Giovi said.</p>

The majority of school nurses in the United States are responsible for covering more than one school, [according to a 2018 study](#). (One-quarter of American schools have no paid nursing staff at all.) Most make less than \$51,000 a year.

“They were understaffed and overworked to begin with,” said Mayumi Willgerodt, an author of the study and an expert on school nursing at the University of Washington.

School nurses are now also managing isolation rooms for sick students, administering virus tests and logging the results, performing contact tracing and tracking quarantine periods, all while trying to reassure worried parents and keeping tabs on frequently changing guidelines.

“We are acting as the de facto health department,” said Robin Cogan, a school nurse in Camden, N.J., and the clinical coordinator of the school nurse program at Rutgers School of Nursing, Camden.

Julie Storjohann, a school nurse in Washington State, spends her days toggling between numerous spreadsheets — for students who have symptoms of Covid, students who have family members who tested positive and students who have been flagged as close contacts of other students with Covid, all of which have different quarantine and testing requirements.

“I am exhausted,” she said. “I was hoping this year was going to be a little better than last year, but it’s actually worse.”

When a student tests positive, Ms. Storjohann begins a laborious contact-tracing process, which can include trying to determine whom the student sat next to at lunch or on the bus. Students have assigned seats on the school bus, she said, but do not always stay in them, so she pores over video footage from inside the bus.

“And I’m supposed to be able to pick out this student and who is around him,” she said. “And they’re wearing a mask, and they’re wearing a hood and hat, and it’s impossible.”

And while the Covid work can feel all-consuming, students still get bloody noses, skinned knees and head lice. “Or there’s a seizure in Room 104,” Ms. Giovi said. “Or the kid that’s got tree nut allergies accidentally ate his friend’s snack, and you’re reading the ingredient list real fast. None of that stops.”

Some nurses said that they had fallen behind on routine back-to-school tasks, such as vision screenings, and no longer had time to provide as much personal attention.

Rosemarie, a school nurse on the East Coast who asked that her full name be withheld, recently noticed a student who was not wearing his hearing aid; he said he had lost it in the building days earlier.

“Pre-Covid, I would have walked around with him and tried to find that hearing aid,” she said. But she had a student in the Covid isolation room and could not leave her post.

Erin Maughan, a school nursing expert at George Mason University, said many nurses were working nights and weekends for no extra pay and were feeling “moral distress” that they still could not get everything done. “At the same time,” she said, “how many hours can one put in?”

The American Rescue Plan, this year’s Covid relief bill, provides funds that school districts can use to hire more nurses, but many struggled to fill open nursing positions even before the pandemic. “There just aren’t people to take the job,” said Linda Mendonça, president of the National Association of School Nurses.

Anger and abuse

The pandemic has also turned school nurses into unwelcome public health messengers, especially when they tell parents that their children must stay home from school for two weeks.

“They just basically hate you,” said Anne Lebouef, a school nurse in Louisiana, who said that she cries several times a week. “They’re yelling at you. They’re accusing you of fear mongering.”

Nurses emphasized that not all parents were hostile, and that they understood why so many are frustrated and upset. Ms. Lebouef said that she had students who have missed more days of school than they have attended because of repeated exposures and quarantines.

“When I have to call this one particular mom, I get so sick to my stomach, and I just want to cry,” she said. “I feel like a terrible person for cheating these kids out of an education.”

For the last year, Ms. Cogan has been running a virtual support group for school nurses across the country. “It’s a safe space for school nurses to share their experiences,” she said, “and to kind of download and say: ‘This is hard. I’ve written my resignation letter 10 times. I’m about to turn it in — can somebody help talk me out of it, help me get through another day?’”

Other nurses have had enough. “For the same pay that we were getting before Covid, having to deal with twice the workload is just too much,” said Ms. McIntyre, who will start a new job as an operating room nurse in December.

The vaccination of children under 12 could alleviate the strain on some school nurses, especially if it reduces the number of students they have to send home from school. (Students who are fully vaccinated do not need to quarantine, the C.D.C. guidelines say.)

But many nurses work in communities where vaccine skepticism is high and relatively few students are expected to get the shots.

Expanded vaccine eligibility could also create new demands on their time. Ms. Giovi said she anticipated a lot of questions from parents about the vaccines, while Ms. Cogan said that she expected many school nurses to take an active role in “building vaccine confidence and leading the efforts for vaccine compliance at school.”

It is a vital job, she said, but also one that may earn nurses even more ire from parents who are opposed to the shots.

As the pandemic smolders on, school nurses had two urgent pleas for parents: to keep their children home when they are sick and — especially, they said — to be kind.

“We’re doing the best that we can do,” Ms. Storjohann said, her voice trembling. She took a moment to collect herself, then added, “It just gets overwhelming.”

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HEADLINE	11/13 Sudan forces kill 5; protesters stay defiant
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/nov/13/sudan-security-forces-kill-at-least-5-as-protesters-defy-shutdown
GIST	<p>Sudanese security forces killed at least five people on Saturday and injured dozens more when they used teargas and live bullets to break up a protest in Khartoum against a military takeover of the government.</p> <p>Protesters defied a military shutdown of the city to call for a return to civilian rule, as plain-clothed snipers reappeared on the streets on Saturday. On Friday, coup leader Abdel Fattah al-Burhan cemented his hold on power by swearing in a new ruling council that excluded the main civilian coalition.</p> <p>Nationwide, hundreds of thousands of people turned out in most of Sudan’s important cities and towns, chanting in support of civilian rule, and denouncing Burhan. Slogans on banners included “stop the killing – enough is enough”.</p>

“We reject the coup. We want the army to be held accountable for all the killing,” said protester Abdul-Rahman Sharaf-Eldeen, a 31-year-old agricultural engineer. “I believe that the army should not be part of any future government.”

The Central Committee of Sudanese Doctors said five people were killed in Saturday’s protests, four by bullets and one as a result of teargas exposure. The toll is likely to rise, with many more in hospital from serious gunshot wounds, and at least one journalist among those injured.

[At least 14 other people have been killed in previous protests](#) against the military since it seized control late last month. Burhan imprisoned more than 100 key political leaders and activists, including most of the cabinet, and put prime minister Abdalla Hamdok under house arrest.

[The coup](#) provoked mass demonstrations inside Sudan, and criticism from the international community, but the military has ignored these as it consolidates its grip.

The country had been in a fragile transitional period after a 2019 pro-democracy uprising [led to the removal from power of the autocrat Omar al-Bashir](#). The military then signed a power-sharing deal with the pro-democracy forces, setting up an 11-member sovereign council, but that was dissolved last month. It has now been replaced by a new council dominated by military loyalists, sworn in on Friday morning. It included powerful paramilitary leader Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, who was also made vice-president.

“I am here to reject the latest decisions of Burhan to form a sovereign council. We don’t him to be back. We want a civilian government,” said Asjad Ahmed, 20, a student at al-Zaim al-Azhari University, protesting near the military headquarters.

In a bid to stem the protests, the government closed down the bridges leading to Khartoum city, where the military HQ and the presidential palace are located, but protesters defied the threats of violence to turn out in large numbers.

“They are trying to terrorise us by sending all those soldiers, but we don’t care, we will march,” said Ashraf el-Haj, 43, a member of a Resistance Committee in Omdurman, across the Nile from Khartoum. “We are fed up with the dictatorship and the silencing of our people.”

When the shooting began, security forces barred ambulances from collecting the injured, eyewitnesses said, forcing them to seek treatment in rickshaws. They also beat up doctors and arrested them at the Eastern Nile hospital in north Khartoum.

“Our colleagues have been beaten and one was arrested, so we are too busy at the moment, we have been overwhelmed with a lot of casualties,” said a doctor at another centre, who asked not to be named.

Information minister Hamza Baloul, who was among those detained at the time of the coup but has since been released, joined the protesters and urged them not to give up in a video posted online.

“The Sudanese people have decided to create a civilian nation and there is no will stronger than that of the Sudanese people’s,” he said. There are also demonstrations in solidarity around the world, with hundreds of people turning up outside Sudanese embassies, including Paris and Berlin.

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HEADLINE	11/13 US vaccinate kids; other nations hold back
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/as-the-u-s-races-to-vaccinate-kids-against-covid-19-some-countries-hold-back-11636799400?mod=hp_lead_pos3
GIST	The U.S. is at the forefront of the race to vaccinate young children. Many governments elsewhere are treading more cautiously.

In Mexico, the president says he won't be held hostage by vaccine makers and there are no plans to inoculate under-18s except those at risk. In many parts of Africa, rollouts are going so slowly that vaccinating children is a distant ambition. Some governments are waiting to see how the [campaign in the U.S. goes](#) before moving ahead.

The U.S., where children between 5 and 11 are [getting shots for the first time](#) this month, isn't alone: Children as young as 3 are being vaccinated in countries such as Colombia, Argentina and China.

The case for vaccinating older people and those with underlying health problems has always been clear-cut: Trials and real-life experience show recipients as gaining significant protection against catching the disease and particularly from being hospitalized and dying from it.

For children, who rarely suffer severe illness from Covid-19, the benefits accrue mainly—though not exclusively—for others: older people with whom they come into contact while infected and the broader population. Advocates of vaccinating children also say it will help restore some normalcy to schools and reduce quarantines.

Many governments have now decided that the upside—further reducing the minor risk of [so-called long Covid](#) and other consequences of the disease in children, and curbing the spread of the virus in the population—outweighs the risks of rare side effects.

In Colombia, 253 children—172 of them 12 and under—have died from Covid-19 in a population of 50 million, according to government statistics. “It’s not a number that is irrelevant,” said Health Minister Fernando Ruiz, adding that Colombia vaccinates children against diseases far less dangerous than Covid-19.

Marcela Guerrero, 37, said she didn't think twice when she heard Colombian authorities were vaccinating children at a concert arena in the capital, Bogotá. “It’s our children’s health at play, and the most important thing is that they’re safe,” said Ms. Guerrero as her 5-year-old boy, Christopher, waited for his shot.

The U.S. this month extended its vaccine campaign to children 5 and older, after the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommended use of the vaccine made by [Pfizer](#) Inc. and [BioNTech SE](#) in 5-to-11-year-olds. These children will receive two shots three weeks apart that contain one-third the dosage of the vaccine delivered to adolescents and adults.

In doing so, the U.S. has moved ahead of countries in Europe in vaccinating children. Across Europe, only children of 12 and older can be vaccinated—though doctors sometimes use their discretion to vaccinate at-risk younger children.

The U.K. recommended most 12-to-15-year-olds get a single dose of the Pfizer vaccine—underlining how different jurisdictions are giving different dosage instructions. After initially resisting the move, government advisers [decided that young teens](#) faced other health risks such as missing out on school due to illness. In the European Union, over-12s receive two shots of the Pfizer or [Moderna](#) Inc. vaccines.

Australia and New Zealand have also held back approval for younger children. Australia’s chief medical officer, Paul Kelly, said Tuesday that Australia would await the real-world experience of the U.S. before committing to vaccinating younger children. The clinical trials for that age group in the U.S. were, “I must say, rather small,” he said.

Japan has authorized shots for ages 12 and above, and more than 60% of 12-to-19-year-olds are fully vaccinated, according to government figures. On Wednesday, Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said vaccination of children 5 to 11 would begin after regulators review Pfizer’s application for that age group, filed earlier that day.

In Israel, which [raced ahead of the world](#) in administering the Pfizer vaccine to its adult and teenage population, the issue of vaccinating under-12s has become divisive.

The country waited until the U.S. approved inoculating children before starting professional discussions that will largely determine government policy. Even so, public-health officials and their civilian advisers have faced threats and invective from some Israeli parents fearful of inoculating their children.

Some members of the government's advisory committee felt they couldn't speak freely without fear of reprisal, said Dr. Gili Regev-Yochay, an adviser to the committee and a director of the infectious-disease epidemiology unit at the Sheba Medical Center. On Wednesday, the committee voted overwhelmingly in favor of vaccinating young children.

As far back as June, Chinese officials approved the emergency use of vaccines made by Sinopharm and Sinovac Biotech Ltd. for children between 3 and 17. Since then, city and provincial governments have begun rolling out the program for that age group. At the end of October, Beijing started vaccinating children between 3 and 11.

Communist Party-run paper the Global Times, citing Chinese vaccine experts, said vaccinating children over 3 is key for the country to reach [herd immunity](#).

In Colombia and Argentina, children as young as 3 are also being immunized with Chinese vaccines. Both countries have used Chinese and other vaccines to combat the disease.

Three studies provided by Colombia's Health Ministry to The Wall Street Journal said the Sinovac vaccine was safe and that side effects, such as dizziness, chest discomfort and rashes, weren't serious. Officials said they also relied on results from Chile, where the same vaccine is being used on children 6 and above.

Mr. Ruiz, the health minister, said authorization to administer the Sinovac vaccine to small children was aimed at preventing transmission as more schools reopen.

"It's absolutely necessary that children return to classes because of the effects we're seeing, like obesity, mental-health problems in children, loneliness syndromes, even abuse in families," he said.

In Cuba, children as young as 2 are getting the shot with a vaccine made on the island. Venezuela, which has employed Cuban and Chinese vaccines for older Venezuelans, on Monday also began vaccinating children as young as 2.

In Argentina, the health minister, Carla Vizzotti, announced the use of China's Sinopharm vaccine early in October for children 3 to 11, saying, "It's one of the safest vaccines."

There, critics in the medical community say authorities haven't provided enough information about the approval process. "The number of parents who reject vaccinating with the Sinopharm is growing," said Roberto Debbag, president of the Latin American Pediatric Infectious Diseases Society in Buenos Aires. Argentine health authorities didn't return calls seeking comment.

Russia hasn't yet authorized use of the vaccine for under-18s. Russian health officials said Wednesday that studies on the use of the Covid-19 vaccine for adolescents have been completed and the results are being analyzed.

Mexico has been more strident, saying it has no plans to vaccinate anyone under 18, other than an estimated one million minors with pre-existing conditions like diabetes or asthma. Government health officials argue that since minors don't normally get serious cases of Covid-19, they don't need the protection from a vaccine.

President Andrés Manuel López Obrador has said pharmaceutical companies want to scare countries into buying more vaccines, either for children or a third dose. "We're not going to be hostage to that," he said.

	<p>Parents in Mexico have sued the government to be allowed to vaccinate their children. A federal judge in October ordered the government to vaccinate minors, saying the policy violated Mexico's constitution by discriminating against teens and children by blocking their access to a vaccine that was available to other age groups. The government has appealed the decision.</p> <p>Mexico has officially registered 1,110 deaths from Covid-19 in people 19 and under, according to the health ministry.</p> <p>Most countries in sub-Saharan Africa have little choice about whether to vaccinate children because their rollouts are going so slowly. About 6.3% of Africans are fully vaccinated. With most governments still struggling to get shots to their most vulnerable citizens, few have opened up vaccinations to those under 18.</p> <p>Among the few exceptions are South Africa, which started vaccinating those from the age of 12 with a single dose of the Pfizer vaccine on Oct. 20, and Guinea, which said it would start vaccinating teenagers this week. Unusually, in South Africa, parental permission isn't needed for teenagers to get vaccinated.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/13 Cop26 agreement cut emissions; but how?
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/cop26-negotiators-work-towards-climate-deal-11636810622?mod=hp_lead_pos1
GIST	<p>GLASGOW—More than 190 nations reached a deal at the United Nations summit here that aims to accelerate greenhouse-gas-emissions cuts across the world, but leaves big questions over how governments will follow through in the coming decade to try to avert the worst effects of global warming.</p> <p>Supporters say the deal—struck Saturday evening after two weeks of negotiations—signals new determination among the world's governments to shift away from burning fossil fuels, the main source of greenhouse gases that scientists say are causing the earth to warm. The agreement, though, features weaknesses that have hamstrung U.N. climate talks over the decades.</p> <p>It has no enforcement mechanism, relying instead on the good faith of the world's governments to adhere to its rules as best they can. In key areas, it doesn't require nations to act, but merely urges or requests them to do so, reflecting wiggle room that was needed to achieve consensus among all governments.</p> <p>U.S. Secretary-General António Guterres reflected the disappointment of many delegates in not getting more concrete commitments through a process that required signoff from almost all of the world's governments.</p> <p>"The approved texts are a compromise," he said. "They reflect the interests, the conditions, the contradictions and the state of political will in the world today."</p> <p>He said the deal makes important steps forward "but unfortunately the collective political will was not enough to overcome some deep contradictions."</p> <p>U.S. climate envoy John Kerry said the agreement accomplished several U.S. goals and brought the world "closer than ever before to avoiding climate chaos."</p> <p>The deal asks governments to strengthen their emissions-reduction targets by the end of next year to keep them in line with what scientists think is necessary to meet the climate target of the 2015 Paris accord: keeping global warming well under 2 degrees Celsius, and close to 1.5 degrees, by the end of the century compared with preindustrial-era temperatures.</p> <p>Governments had failed to agree to cuts sufficient to hit that target ahead of the summit here, called COP26. The review next year was seen by delegates who pushed it as a way of wringing fresh cuts from some countries in the near future.</p>

Diplomats agreed to insert language calling for a “phase down” of coal and “inefficient” fossil fuel subsidies. The language isn’t binding on any countries, and was watered down from earlier drafts. It was seized upon by many supporters, though, as a symbolic pivot from fossil fuels. The language also marked the first time that coal or fossil fuels were mentioned—and implicitly blamed—in a U.N. deal to fight climate change.

Saturday’s agreement also sets new rules for trading carbon credits between countries, allowing governments to achieve their emissions goals by funding greenhouse-gas-reduction projects in another country. Officials expect the rules will lay the foundation for an international carbon market.

Many businesses have looked to carbon trading as a way to lower their own net emissions, amid pressure from regulators, investors and consumers. While some jurisdictions, like the European Union and California, already trade carbon, executives hope a U.N. deal might speed the creation of a global marketplace.

The deal leaves unresolved how wealthy nations will provide a [big increase in funding](#) in the coming years for poorer nations to adopt renewable energy and to protect themselves from the effects of global warming. Without those funds, developing nations say they will suffer catastrophic damage from climate change and won’t be able to implement the emissions reductions they have promised.

The U.S., the EU and other rich nations hope the deal will nonetheless encourage private investors to shift trillions of dollars of capital into low-carbon technologies. Those funds will be crucial to cutting emissions quickly, developed countries say, dwarfing the money that they could feasibly provide from their government budgets.

Zhao Yiming, head of the Chinese delegation and vice minister at the Chinese Ministry of Ecology and Environment, said the developing world “needs more financial support in their fight against climate change. This is definitely something that we need to continue working on for the future.”

The world is far off track from its goal of keeping rising temperatures in check. The U.N. says current plans would allow emissions to rise 13% by 2030 compared with 2010. Scientists say they must fall 45% to hit the 1.5 degree target.

The big question following the deal struck Saturday is how to get the U.S., China and other big emitters to back even sharper emissions cuts when they have just updated their climate plans within the past year.

After the deal, Mr. Kerry said the U.S. wouldn’t update its climate plan next year, saying the target—a 50% reduction in greenhouse gases by 2030—is already ambitious. “That’s stretching the limits right now,” he said.

Meanwhile, China, the biggest emitter of greenhouse gases, has said it won’t update its emission plan next year.

The best hope for limiting warming to 1.5 degrees may come from China overperforming its targets, negotiators said during late stages of the Glasgow talks. The plan that Beijing submitted to the U.N. pledges to begin reducing emissions before 2030.

But many analysts expect that China’s emissions will likely fall sooner, particularly if China’s coal use begins to decline in 2026, as President Xi Jinping said in a speech this April. Analysts say that other countries could overperform their targets if the cost of solar and wind power continues to fall and if battery technologies to store renewable energy for when it is most needed become widely available.

Some governments that are seen as most vulnerable to climate change voiced frustration with the U.N.’s process for the climate talks, which require unanimity among governments for a deal. They were looking for more decisive measures to limit warming to 1.5 degrees, but saw those efforts blocked by major emitters such as China and big fossil-fuel exporters such as Saudi Arabia.

	“It’s always the lowest common denominator,” said Saber Hossain Chowdhury, a senior negotiator for Bangladesh. “Although consensus is the essence of multilateralism, it can be abused.”
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HEADLINE	11/13 OK National Guard rejects vaccine mandate
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2021/11/13/oklahoma-national-guard-vaccine-mandate/
GIST	<p>The Oklahoma National Guard has rejected the Defense Department’s requirement for all service members to receive the coronavirus vaccine and will allow personnel to sidestep the policy with no repercussions, an order from the governor that could serve as a blueprint for other Republican-led states that have challenged Biden administration mandates.</p> <p>Brig. Gen. Thomas Mancino, appointed this week by Republican Gov. Kevin Stitt as adjutant of the state’s 10,000 National Guard soldiers and airmen, on Thursday notified those under his command that they are not required to receive the vaccine and won’t be punished if they decline it.</p> <p>It’s an extraordinary refusal of Pentagon policy by the general and follows Stitt’s written request to Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin seeking suspension of the requirement for Guard personnel in the state.</p> <p>“We will respond appropriately,” John Kirby, a Pentagon spokesperson, said of Stitt’s letter. “That said, Secretary Austin believes that a vaccinated force is a more ready force. That is why he has ordered mandatory vaccines for the total force, and that includes our National Guard, who contribute significantly to national missions at home and abroad.”</p> <p>The governor installed Mancino after having removed the state’s prior adjutant, Maj. Gen. Michael C. Thompson, who has advocated for his troops to get vaccinated against the coronavirus and last month publicized having received a booster shot. Carly Atchison, a spokesperson for Stitt, said Thompson’s departure was unrelated to his stance on vaccine policy and that the governor had explored a change over the last few months.</p> <p>The new vaccine policy, distributed the day after Thompson was relieved of his leadership post, was directed by the governor, Atchison said.</p> <p>Thompson did not respond to messages seeking comment. He told the New York Times that he believed his ouster was politically motivated. “There’s not another reason for it,” the general said.</p> <p>Stitt contracted the virus in July 2020 and was vaccinated in March. Along with other Republican governors and lawmakers, he has described Biden’s vaccine mandates as “unconstitutional,” declaring it a personal choice.</p> <p>Overall Republican resistance to vaccine mandates has intensified in recent weeks, with multiple GOP governors filing suit to stop the requirement for federal contractors and a Friday court ruling temporarily halting the administration’s directive that private businesses employing more than 100 workers require inoculation or impose onerous testing guidelines. Oklahoma’s objection to the Pentagon’s directive would appear to open another pathway for states to challenge the president’s orders.</p> <p>Mancino’s new policy walks a line between a state’s military orders, in which the governor acts as commander in chief for operations such as disaster relief, and federal military orders, in which Guard members carry out missions under the president’s command. For now, it appears that Oklahoma Guard members can refuse the vaccine, but that they would be subject to the requirement if they are put on active duty for a federally mandated assignment, such as an overseas deployment.</p> <p>A spokesman for the National Guard Bureau, speaking to the Stars and Stripes newspaper, characterized the move as “a legal gray area” and suggested there would be a review.</p>

A senior official in the Oklahoma National Guard, speaking on the condition of anonymity to discuss the matter candidly, said that a recent survey of Guard members in the state showed that approximately 13% indicated they would not take the vaccine.

The official declined to address whether leadership of the Oklahoma National Guard was in step with Austin's belief that vaccination is imperative for military units to be ready for an emergency. The National Guard, like all of the military's active-duty components, requires personnel to be vaccinated against numerous other potential illnesses.

In most cases, deployments entail months of preparation, leaving ample time for those who aren't vaccinated now to be in compliance should they be called upon for assignments outside the state's borders, the official said. But the issue already has complicated deployments: The vaccination status of several rescue airmen posed challenges during the military's evacuation from Afghanistan in August, the Air Force has said.

A spokesperson for the Oklahoma National Guard did not address how many of its members are vaccinated. Combined, the entire Army National Guard, which faces a June deadline to comply with the Pentagon's mandate, is about 46% fully vaccinated. The Air National Guard is about 80% vaccinated ahead of its Dec. 12 deadline.

The National Guard has absorbed a disproportionate share of the 75 deaths among military personnel infected with COVID-19, the disease caused by the coronavirus. National Guard members account for 28% of all COVID-related deaths in the military, but they constitute only about 19% of the entire armed forces. The Army National Guard has the highest death toll across the services, according to Pentagon data.

Lindsay Cohn, a professor who studies civil-military relations at the Naval War College, said it appears the governor has pitted the state chain of command against the federal chain of command, and created a civil-military rift by attempting to use his authority over National Guard forces to make a public statement about the vaccine mandate.

Because the National Guard reports to state and federal officials, Cohn said, Army or Air Force leadership in Washington could pursue administrative action against anyone who resists the federal mandate. A governor, she said, cannot stop senior service officials from discharging people.

Still, the situation puts the Defense Department "in the very awkward position of pitting themselves against the governor and the still-powerful narrative" that the National Guard primarily belongs to the states, she said.

Peter Feaver, a political science professor at Duke University and expert on civil-military relations, said it's not unprecedented for a governor to politicize his or her oversight of a state's National Guard personnel, but that replacing an adjutant general "so as to flout" the Pentagon's vaccine mandate is unhelpful. It's problematic for readiness, he noted, and sends a message to the public that the gap is widening between active-duty military forces and the reserve components.

"It is one more sign," Feaver said, "of corrosion in the professionalism that should be the hallmark of the total force."

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HEADLINE	11/13 Another advance child tax credit check
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/nation-world/child-tax-credit-irs-check-monday/507-2d2dc249-a84a-403d-8f7a-043028910114
GIST	The next installment of the advance child tax credit payment is set to start hitting bank accounts via direct deposit and through the mail Monday. It will be the fifth of the six monthly payments scheduled for 2021.

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HEADLINE	11/12 Staffing delays Seattle police, fire response
SOURCE	https://mynorthwest.com/3226429/rantz-teen-watches-father-die-staffing-police-fire/
GIST	<p>In two 911 calls, a 13-year-old Seattle teen pleaded for help as his father suffered a medical emergency in their apartment. But what would normally elicit an immediate response was delayed, and the father died. First responders blame the city's ongoing staffing crisis, which was worsened by the COVID-19 vaccine mandate.</p> <p>When Seattle Fire arrived, they were told to wait for police before entering. The address was flagged as unsafe for Seattle Fire to enter. At the time, the precinct was down two officers, leaning on non-patrol volunteers to meet minimum staffing levels. It took Seattle police 15 minutes to arrive, delaying medics from performing life-saving measures. Despite their best efforts, the father died. And it turns out the address was flagged due to a <i>previous tenant</i> and did not apply to its current residents.</p> <p>Seattle Mayor Jenny Durkan's COVID vaccine mandate crippled already understaffed police and fire departments. They do not have enough employees to respond to emergency calls. And through no fault of Seattle police or Seattle Fire, a man is dead when he might have been saved.</p> <p>A delayed emergency response</p> <p>The Jason Rantz Show on KTTH obtained documents and 911 calls outlining the tragic events of this Nov. 2 incident in Seattle's Crown Hill neighborhood. Several sources, speaking on the condition of anonymity, provided background to better explain the incident.</p> <p>The teen first called 911 at 1:24 p.m. to explain that his 45-year-old father was experiencing a medical emergency. He wasn't sure what it was.</p> <p>"Is he conscious?" the operator asks the teen about his dad.</p> <p>"I don't know. I think he ... yeah, he's conscious but he's not OK. Hurry," the soft-spoken teen responded. The teen said his father was "making a moaning noise," according to the incident report.</p> <p>At 1:26 p.m., the call was dispatched to Seattle Fire.</p> <p>A medic unit would respond first, given what is known now. These are units staffed with two medics and have the most medical experience. But Seattle Fire was down one medic unit due to the staffing crisis. A spokesperson for Seattle Fire notes that the initial dispatch was for an aid response and that a medic on duty would not have been sent early on.</p>

Instead, A18 (“Aid-18”) was assigned to the incident and arrived within five to six minutes. This unit is comprised of two firefighters. But they could not enter the residence without officers present.

Seattle Fire warned not to enter without police

When the 911 call came in, the dispatcher twice alerted Aid-18 that the resident has a history of threats toward police and firefighters.

The dispatcher instructed the firefighters that they must “be accompanied by SPD to secure the scene.” This is known as a “cautionary premise note,” which is meant to provide information to Seattle Fire in order to keep them safe when entering a residence.

A18 drove around the block and staged, waiting for SPD at approximately 1:32 p.m., according to a source. They hit their on-scene button at 1:35 p.m., according to the incident report.

As A18 waited, the teen called 911 a second time at 1:37 p.m. — 13 minutes after his initial call. He told the dispatcher that his father is barely breathing. You can hear a panic creeping into his voice as he watched his father’s condition worsen.

“He wasn’t like this before, I’m just really worried,” he told a new dispatcher.

“Look at his chest. Tell me if it’s rising and falling,” the dispatcher asked.

“Barely. Almost not at all,” he responded. “Almost. He’s still moving.”

A18 was done waiting

In a medical emergency, every second counts. But, according to the incident report, a police unit wasn’t assigned to the incident until almost 1:37 p.m. — a full 11 minutes after the dispatcher sent units to the residence.

A18 waited for about seven minutes. With another call from the teen coming through, the firefighters made a decision.

They cautiously entered the residence without police at approximately 1:39 p.m.

The firefighters started CPR when they saw the father. E35 (“Engine 35,” which comprises four firefighters) arrived a minute later to assist. Soon after, the police showed up.

Police arrive, but it’s too late

Police arrived on the scene — at 1:45 p.m. — and began to assist. At the same time, M10 (“Medic-10 unit, comprised of two medics) arrived at the scene.

A source says Seattle police escorted the teen to the apartment’s lobby, as others worked to save his father. But it would be too late. Despite an hour-long resuscitation effort, they were unable to keep the man alive.

Due to privacy laws, the 911 calls were redacted when the teen details specific medical issues his father was facing. The medical examiner, as of this week, hasn’t released a cause of death. But two veteran medics familiar with the incident explained to the Jason Rantz Show on KTTH that this was likely avoidable.

One medic explained that “had it been addressed early, his chance of survival would have been 60%.”

The medic believes it was a ventricular fibrillation arrest based on details from the case and noted “it’s very save-able,” so long as it’s treated quickly. Indeed, Public Health of Seattle & King County [notes](#) a 67% survival rate if Seattle first responders get to the patient before the cardiac arrest. It’s just 21% if they arrive after. It’s unclear when the father went into cardiac arrest.

The medic says that this specific heart issue explains why the resuscitation efforts were attempted at the residence, instead of at a hospital. This process is normal, the medic says.

It wasn't just a staffing issue that delayed the response. An error also played a role in this outcome: The cautionary premise note on the address was outdated.

Outdated warning delayed response

In the aftermath of the tragedy, it became clear that the cautionary note attached to the address should not have been there. At least, not for the current tenants.

A spokesperson with Seattle Fire confirmed the warning was for the apartment's previous tenant. That tenant was "known to be combative towards SFD and SPD." But that tenant moved out of the apartment, and the victim and his son recently moved in. The cautionary note was never removed from Seattle Fire's internal system.

"Unfortunately, we learned during the most recent emergency response that the cautionary note was for a previous tenant," a spokesperson for Seattle Fire emailed the Jason Rantz Show on KTTH. "We are carefully reviewing this incident from many angles in our department (operations, dispatch, etc.) and our Premise Notes Policy."

This incident revealed a flaw in the system. It only checks the premise notes every two years. How is Seattle Fire to know when a potentially dangerous tenant moves out? The spokesperson said the department recently installed a new system "which includes the capability to verify premise notes and alert operations companies on a more frequent basis."

Unless the check is daily, there could be situations like this that fall through the cracks. But it's why Seattle Fire relies on Seattle police in situations like these.

Staffing crisis played a role

The prevailing opinion amongst Seattle Fire and SPD is that the current staffing crisis is to blame. It was not the fault of officers that they couldn't arrive at the scene sooner, they say.

One medic noted to the Jason Rantz Show on KTTH that officers often arrive on scene at the same time as they do — sometimes earlier. But since the mass exodus of officers accelerated in 2020, after months of abuse from local activists in the aftermath of the George Floyd killing, the situation has deteriorated.

Due to severe staffing shortages, police in the North Precinct — where the teen and father lived — are the slowest precinct to respond to 911 calls. According to a city [report](#) from August 2021, the average response time for priority 1 calls (emergencies in progress) was nearly 13 minutes in Q2 of this year. The average response time for priority 2 calls was an astonishing 61 minutes.

The vaccine mandate only accelerated the crisis.

Vaccine mandate turned a crisis into a catastrophe

Durkan's vaccine mandate took nearly 100 officers off the streets in mid-October. Officer terminations are pending. At the time, the department was already dangerously understaffed with just over 1,000 deployable officers in the department. Now, it's under 1,000.

"One call could take out an entire precinct, wiping us out completely," one officer told the Jason Rantz Show on KTTH.

After the vaccine mandate, the department [acknowledged internally that it did not have enough staff](#) to respond to 911 calls. Several emails obtained by the Jason Rantz Show on KTTH show SPD staff asking for non-patrol officers to volunteer to take open patrol shifts.

	<p>On the day of the incident, the 2nd Watch was down two patrol officers. A spokesperson with Seattle Police confirmed that the precinct filled the open shifts with volunteer, non-patrol officers. At 12:38 pm that day, an all-staff email went to officers noting that General Investigation Unit detectives helped the department reach minimum staffing levels.</p> <p>But one officer tells me that the staffing shortage happens “every day, every shift, in every precinct.” Another officer cites the North Precinct as being especially impacted.</p> <p>Even with the address warning as potentially dangerous, short of a major citywide emergency, officers would have been able to respond relatively quickly with normal staffing.</p> <p>Similarly, Seattle Fire had staffing problems before the vaccine mandate. But afterward, they’ve been forced to turn units offline in staggering numbers.</p> <p>This could get worse Instead of addressing the staffing crisis, there’s concern that city leadership is making it worse.</p> <p>In their 2022 budget, Seattle City Council members proposed nearly \$11 million in SPD cuts. It includes cuts to the very hiring incentives that could help bring in much-needed police. And the mayor, at any point, could rescind the order sidelining the nearly 100 officers who will not comply with her vaccine mandate. Officers argue the bigger public health and safety threat is the lack of police.</p> <p>In the end, the staffing crisis contributed to the death of an innocent father. Had the police been able to arrive sooner, CPR would have commenced roughly seven minutes sooner. Would that have saved the father’s life? We won’t ever know.</p> <p>What we do know is that a 13-year-old did what he should have by calling 911. But he ended up watching his father suffer and die. And it was likely preventable.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/12 DOH: 750,477 cases, 8934 deaths
SOURCE	https://www.thenewstribune.com/article255779856.html
GIST	<p>The Washington state Department of Health reported 2,254 new COVID-19 cases and 77 deaths Friday.</p> <p>Statewide totals from the illness caused by the coronavirus are 750,477 and 8,934 deaths. Those numbers are up from 746,354 cases and 8,857 deaths as of Wednesday. The case total includes 89,400 infections listed as probable. DOH revises previous case and death counts daily.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/13 Experts: Covid numbers not good for winter
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2021/11/12/health/covid-cases-winter-surge/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)The coronavirus numbers don't look so good this week. New Covid-19 diagnoses are up in about half of US states over the past week. Hospitalizations are up in 11 states, and deaths have risen in 17 states.</p> <p>US coronavirus cases have plateaued in recent weeks, holding on to about half of the growth from this summer's latest surge.</p> <p>While new cases have fallen in some states, they're rising in others, particularly some region's cold-weather states.</p> <p>Southern states that were a large driving force behind this summer's surge now have some of the lowest case rates. Two months ago, Florida and Texas together accounted for nearly a quarter (22%) of all new cases. Now, those two large states account for just 6% of all cases.</p>

Florida sliced new cases to a 10th of what they were two months ago and Texas to a fifth.

That should sound like good news. But with less dramatic decreases in other, less populous states -- and slight increases in some others, particularly in the Northeast and Mountain regions -- overall US numbers are holding steady on the whole.

It's confusing, and the numbers may be sending a mixed message to people. They are not, however, sending a mixed message to epidemiologists, who do not foresee a good winter for the US or for the world.

Too many people remain unvaccinated, and too many continue to defy and even fight advice to wear masks when indoors with other people. This dangerous combination might mean more surges, even if not as high as in the recent past, and in areas beyond those currently seeing rising cases.

"I don't know what's going to happen over the next few weeks. But I have a feeling it's not going to be pretty," Michael Osterholm, who heads the center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy at the University of Minnesota, told CNN.

"Today is a really sad day," epidemiologist Ali Mokdad, who has been tracking the coronavirus pandemic since the beginning at the University of Washington, told CNN. "Cases are going up. It was coming down. This is at a time when the United States has all the tools we need to prevent a surge, all the tools we need to save lives. We have the best vaccines, and we have plenty of them," he said.

"And people are not willing to get them."

False sense of security

Mokdad said states such as Florida have a false sense of security.

"Florida has a large population of the elderly, who went and got vaccinated. And the young people simply got infected. So the virus ran out of people to infect," he said.

But he said immunity on both groups is waning.

"There will be a lot of winter travel to Florida," he said. "Infections will start all over again," he predicted. "We are so interconnected."

Diagnoses and hospitalizations are both headed upward in Michigan, with hospitalizations up 20% in the past week, according to state data.

"Metro Detroit once again is becoming a hotspot," Dr. Nick Gilpin, director of infection prevention and epidemiology at Beaumont Health, a health system in southeast Michigan, told a news conference Thursday.

"I have a feeling we'll be in this world for the next couple months because I don't see much that can change this unless people start radically changing behavior. This could be a four or five month affair," Gilpin added.

Like Mokdad, Gilpin blames the unvaccinated and a refusal to wear masks. It's hitting hospitals and clinics hard, he said.

"I mean, it's brutal. No one wants to see these Covid patients this late. But we're masking up and trying to help people get better," Gilpin said.

"That said, there's probably no hospital in the state that isn't dealing with staffing shortages. It's difficult, especially as we look to a fourth surge that could last through the winter. This surge is shaping up more to be a marathon than a sprint."

Millions still unvaccinated can fuel new surges

In Colorado, where cases were up 30% in the past week, according to Johns Hopkins University data, Gov. Jared Polis declared the entire state to be at high risk of Covid-19 transmission or exposure and signed an executive order saying everybody over 18 was eligible for a booster dose of vaccine.

"We want to ensure that Coloradans have every tool they need to protect themselves from this deadly virus and to help reduce the stress on our hospitals and health care workers. Every Coloradan is now eligible to get the booster so they can protect themselves and their families," Polis said in a statement.

Mokdad approves. "Science is telling us we need three doses to be immune," he said. "We are losing our credibility as scientists unless you say it -- we need three doses to be protected."

The US Food and Drug Administration and the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have OK'd booster doses for most US adults, and the FDA is considering extending authorization for booster doses of Pfizer's vaccine to all adults.

Osterholm thinks boosting people will help -- but says it's far more important to get more people vaccinated in the first place.

"If we see upticks in L.A. or New York City, we could just as easily find ourselves back to where we were. At this point, there's no evidence of that happening," he said in his podcast this week.

"But I must tell you that given the rates of vaccination ... we surely could see major surges in both of those metropolitan areas where with the population density being what it is, could really, truly raise the number of national cases in short order," he added.

An estimated 60 million Americans remain unvaccinated. That's plenty of people who can help fuel new surges, Osterholm said.

"Overall, there's still a lot of human wood left for this coronavirus forest fire to burn," he said.

Even in states, cities and counties with high vaccination rates, enough people remain unvaccinated or undervaccinated to help keep the virus spreading. And if immunity is waning as quickly as some studies indicate it may be, Osterholm fears more breakthrough infections, even among the vaccinated.

What could be ahead this winter

Osterholm is pessimistic about the coming weeks. "That fact, combined with Delta, schools and upcoming holidays, has me skeptical that we won't be seeing new hotspots emerge in this country over the next several weeks and months. So where do I see us going? I think we will continue to see surges. They may not be nearly as high as the ones we've just had, but they will occur."

And they will not be restricted to the current hotspots, Mokdad predicted. The holidays will make sure of that. "People are moving out and about like there is no Covid-19," he said. "We are going to see Americans traveling -- Thanksgiving and then all the way through New Year. We are going to see a surge, and that surge is going to be very bad."

AAA is predicting travel for Thanksgiving will rebound to near pre-pandemic levels, with 53.4 million Americans expected to travel for the holiday -- a 13% increase from last year.

And plenty of states have such low vaccination levels that they're bonfires waiting to be ignited, Mokdad said.

"I mean, West Virginia [is] 41.1% fully vaccinated. So 60% of the population, at least, don't have immunity against infection," he said.

	<p>"So, what do you expect? We're going to have a surge. If you look at Montana, 51%. Wyoming, 44.6%. I mean, you could go on and on. There's so many states right now below 50. Louisiana, 48.1%. Alabama, 45.2%."</p> <p>These same states, Mokdad and Osterholm both pointed out, have populations largely resistant to mask use, as well.</p> <p>"Nobody is listening," Mokdad said morosely. He said he and fellow epidemiologists were discussing how they could bring attention to the dire situation.</p> <p>"Some of us we were talking about going on a hunger strike. We are really frustrated. It's depressing that we know how protect our population and we are not doing it," he said.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/13 Govt: large hike in Medicare premiums
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2021/11/12/health/medicare-premium-hike/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)The federal government announced a large hike in Medicare premiums Friday night, blaming the pandemic but also what it called uncertainty over how much it may have to be forced to pay for a pricey and controversial new Alzheimer's drug.</p> <p>The 14.5% increase in Part B premiums will take monthly payments for those in the lowest income bracket from \$148.50 a month this year to \$170.10 in 2022. Medicare Part B covers physician services, outpatient hospital services, certain home health services, medical equipment, and certain other medical and health services not covered by Medicare Part A, including medications given in doctors' offices.</p> <p>The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services played down the spike, pointing out that most beneficiaries also collect Social Security benefits and will see a cost-of-living adjustment of 5.9% in their 2022 monthly payments, the agency said in a statement. That's the largest bump in 30 years.</p> <p>"This significant COLA increase will more than cover the increase in the Medicare Part B monthly premium," CMS said. "Most people with Medicare will see a significant net increase in Social Security benefits. For example, a retired worker who currently receives \$1,565 per month from Social Security can expect to receive a net increase of \$70.40 more per month after the Medicare Part B premium is deducted."</p> <p>The increase, however, is far more than the Medicare trustees estimated in their annual report, which was released in late August. They predicted the monthly premium for 2022 would be \$158.50.</p> <p>The actual spike -- the largest since 2016 -- could hurt some seniors financially.</p> <p>It "will consume the entire annual cost of living adjustment (COLA) of Social Security recipients with the very lowest benefits, of about \$365 per month," said Mary Johnson, a Social Security and Medicare policy analyst for The Senior Citizens League, an advocacy group. "Social Security recipients with higher benefits should be able to cover the \$21.60 per month increase, but they may not wind up with as much left over as they were counting on."</p> <p>Medicare premiums have typically increased at a far faster rate than Social Security's annual adjustments, the league said. And much of the 2022 increase in Social Security benefits will be eaten up by inflation, which is also rising at a rapid clip.</p> <p>CMS said part of the increase for 2022 was because of uncertainty over how much the agency will end up paying to treat beneficiaries to be treated with Aduhelm, an Alzheimer's drug approved by the US Food and Drug Administration in June over the objections of its advisers. Some experts estimate it will cost \$56,000 a year. Medicare is deciding whether to pay for it now on a case-by-case basis.</p>

	<p>Because Aduhelm is administered in physicians' offices, it should be covered under Medicare Part B, not Part D plans, which pay for medications bought at pharmacies. Traditional Medicare enrollees have to pick up 20% of the cost of most Part B medications, which would translate into about \$11,500 in out-of-pocket costs for those prescribed Aduhelm.</p> <p>"The increase in the Part B premium for 2022 is continued evidence that rising drug costs threaten the affordability and sustainability of the Medicare program," CMS Administrator Chiquita Brooks-LaSure said in a statement. "The Biden-Harris Administration is working to make drug prices more affordable and equitable for all Americans, and to advance drug pricing reform through competition, innovation, and transparency."</p> <p>Also, Congress last year limited the 2021 premium increase even as emergency Medicare spending surged during the coronavirus pandemic. The monthly charge rose less than \$4.</p> <p>Along with the premium spike, the annual deductible for Medicare Part B beneficiaries is rising to \$233 in 2022, up from \$203 in 2021.</p> <p>Medicare is the federal health insurance plan covering more than 62 million people, mostly 65 and older.</p> <p>Part B premiums are based on income. Individuals earning \$500,000 or more a year and joint filers making \$750,000 or more annually will pay \$578.30 a month for coverage in 2022.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/12 Giant companies suddenly splitting up
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2021/11/12/investing/johnson-johnson-ge-toshiba-splits/index.html
GIST	<p>New York (CNN Business)Breaking up is the newest craze for ginormous global companies. Johnson & Johnson, Toshiba and GE announced plans to split into multiple entities this week. The trend may have only just begun.</p> <p>Conglomerates are big and unwieldy. Wall Street hates them, because it doesn't know how to value them properly. CEOs and corporate boards are finally getting the message: Nimble is the new big.</p> <p>J&J's (JNJ) split into two companies — one for its consumer products and another for its drugs and medical devices — is the latest shakeup in the health care sector. Many other Big Pharma companies, including Pfizer (PFE), Merck (MRK) and GlaxoSmithKline (GSK), have either already spun off large divisions in the past few years or have plans to do so.</p> <p>Investors are willing to pay a higher price for rapidly growing drug, biotech and medical equipment businesses than generics and brand-name consumer products. Shares of J&J were up nearly 2% in early trading Friday.</p> <p>But, as the Toshiba (TOSBF) and GE (GE) splits show, corporate divorces aren't limited to health care.</p> <p>"For survival and keeping up with market trends, companies do have to look at what their most profitable lines of business are and where they should spend most of their time and focus," said Liz Young, head of investment strategy at SoFi, in an interview with CNN Business.</p> <p>"Competition is fierce. Sometimes you have to break it down to build it back up," Young added.</p> <p>Wave of big firms breaking up Large companies around the world in a variety of sectors are finding religion in getting smaller.</p> <p>Tech giant Dell (DELL) recently spun off its cloud business VMWare (VMW) into a fully separate company. Retailer L Brands has broken apart into two firms: Bath & Body Works and Victoria's Secret.</p>

IBM (IBM) has spun out its information technology services unit into a new company dubbed Kyndryl. As a result, Kyndryl now has more flexibility to do joint ventures with IBM cloud rivals. For example, Kyndryl announced a deal with Microsoft (MSFT) on Friday.

"We have new freedom to go to the market. We can continue to serve IBM customers but can also expand partnerships with other tech providers," said Kyndryl chief financial officer David Wyshner in an interview with CNN Business earlier this month.

Other companies may find that spinning off divisions will give them greater autonomy to forge business relationships that may have not made as much strategic sense as part of a colossal conglomerate.

But spinoffs and asset sales are also a way for companies to reverse decisions that investors weren't thrilled with in the first place.

Take telecom giants Verizon (VZ) and AT&T (T), the owner of CNN Business parent WarnerMedia, for example.

Both stocks have lagged the broader market for the past few years, in part because of sluggish revenue and profit growth but also out of concern that the two companies strayed too far from their core wireless businesses by making splashy media deals.

Verizon bought AOL and Yahoo and combined them into a unit that it first branded as Oath and then renamed Verizon Media. The acquisition never really paid off. Verizon sold the media division to private equity titan Apollo (APO) for \$5 billion in September and is retaining just a 10% stake in it.

And AT&T is planning to spin off WarnerMedia and merge it with cable and streaming giant Discovery (DISCA). The deal, expected to close in the middle of 2022, will create a new company named Warner Bros. Discovery.

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HEADLINE	11/12 Record high job openings persist in Nov.
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/record-high-job-openings-persist-in-tight-labor-market-11636713002
GIST	<p>The U.S. economy has had more than 10 million open jobs since June, an extraordinary stretch of imbalance in the labor market that also includes record numbers of workers quitting their jobs.</p> <p>As of Nov. 5, there were a projected 11.2 million U.S. job openings, according to estimates from the jobs site Indeed, exceeding 7.4 million unemployed workers in the U.S. labor force last month.</p> <p>The so-called quits rate—a measurement of workers leaving jobs as a share of overall employment—was 3% in September, a record high, Friday's Labor Department data showed, a sign of worker confidence in the job market. Total quits, which reflects the number of jobs that workers left voluntarily, hit another record at 4.4 million.</p> <p>Total job openings have been well above their pre-pandemic peak—about 7.5 million in November 2018—since February, when Covid-19 vaccinations initially ramped up and the U.S. economy started to more broadly reopen. Many of the open jobs are in warehousing, shipping and consumer-facing retail, a trend that is likely to be supercharged by the holiday shopping season and strong consumer demand.</p> <p>“Even accounting for seasonality, we could see stronger demand for retail and logistics positions,” said Nick Bunker, an economist at Indeed. “There’s been strong demand for goods for quite some time.”</p> <p>The glut of open positions isn’t expected to abate in the near term, as businesses compete for workers for the holiday season. Employers are raising wages and offering benefits such as training and signing bonuses to attract workers. Workers, meanwhile, have demonstrated heightened bargaining power by</p>

quitting jobs at historic rates, either to take better jobs elsewhere or to assess their options in an economy emerging from the Covid-19 pandemic.

Initial claims for unemployment benefits, a proxy for layoffs, are nearing pre-pandemic lows. The four-week moving average of weekly claims was 278,000 for the week ending Nov. 6. Claims have declined since the average reached a recent peak of 424,000 in mid-July.

“It’s a challenging time for recruitment, particularly for those with sophisticated technical skill sets,” said Andrew Corbett, who runs the innovation and delivery center for NTT DATA Services, a global information technology consulting firm, in Nashville, Tenn.

NTT DATA is hiring briskly and has doubled-down on training for new hires so it can expand the pool of applicants. It runs a campus-to-careers program that identifies promising candidates while they are still in college. The firm has also focused on hiring applicants without university degrees who have gone through boot camp or certificate programs in web and mobile development, data science and data analytics, Mr. Corbett said. After that, it offers more training in-house to suit the company’s needs.

To retain existing employees, NTT DATA has started to offer more flexible working arrangements and regularly re-evaluates compensation to make sure it aligns with that of competitors.

“We couldn’t keep employees very long if we weren’t attentive to their personal lives and professional aspirations,” Mr. Corbett said.

Labor-force participation, or the share of working-age people employed or looking for work, has remained lower than normal despite [strong job growth](#) during the recovery. Employers, especially in lower wage sectors like food service, might normally hire workers who are unemployed, but are now looking to entice people [to leave their current jobs for better pay or benefits](#).

“The vast majority of the quitting we’ve seen in 2021 has been job switching,” Mr. Bunker said. “Industries that usually hire people out of work may have shifted their approach towards poaching.”

A separate state-level report showed the rate at which workers were quitting in August—the latest data available—wasn’t widespread across the U.S. The so-called quits rate that month increased in 14 states, with the largest increases occurring in Kentucky, Idaho and South Dakota. Growth in job openings has been more uniform, according to Indeed. With the exception of Honolulu, postings are at least 25% above the pre-pandemic baseline in all large metros, it said.

New openings, especially seasonal ones with set end dates, are growing rapidly. The National Retail Federation, an industry group, anticipates that retailers will hire 500,000 to 665,000 seasonal workers compared with the 486,000 they hired in 2020. Target Corp. aims to hire 100,000 seasonal workers and around 30,000 warehouse employees, while Walmart Inc. wants to hire 150,000. Many of those positions are offered as permanent.

Logistics companies are also staffing up and offering incentives as they race competitors to fill positions. United Parcel Service Inc. is hiring an additional 100,000 employees nationwide for seasonal positions, and they have enlisted current employees to help. Employees can earn \$200 for every job applicant they steer toward the company, provided the person works through the holiday rush. Amazon plans to hire 150,000 seasonal employees starting at \$18 per hour, with sign-on bonuses of up to \$3,000.

“Employers are trying harder—a lot more places are offering starting bonuses,” and those bonus offers are concentrated in jobs that don’t require a bachelor’s degree, said Rucha Vankudre, senior economist at Emsi Burning Glass, a labor market analytics firm. In February 2020, just under 2% of job openings that didn’t require a bachelor’s degree mentioned starting bonuses, and now just under 5% mention them, based on her firm’s jobs postings data.

	Growth in job openings isn't restricted to holiday-related consumption. Job postings in consulting, human resources, software development and at pharmacies are also booming, the latter likely the result of high demand for flu shots and Covid-19 vaccine boosters, according to Indeed's analysis and government data.
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HEADLINE	11/12 US firms aid China despite security concern
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-firms-aid-chinas-bid-for-chip-dominance-despite-security-concerns-11636718400
GIST	<p>U.S. firms and their China affiliates are ramping up investment in Chinese semiconductor companies, aiding Beijing's bid for chip-sector dominance and complicating Washington's efforts to preserve America's lead in the critical technology, a Wall Street Journal investigation has found.</p> <p>U.S. venture-capital firms, chip-industry giants and other private investors participated in 58 investment deals in China's semiconductor industry from 2017 through 2020, more than double the number from the prior four years, according to an analysis of deals data by New York-based research firm Rhodium Group done at the Journal's request.</p> <p>Major chip company Intel Corp. is among the active investors, backing a Chinese company now called Primarius Technologies Co., which specializes in chip-design tools that U.S. companies currently lead in making, a separate Journal review of data from analytics firm PitchBook Data Inc. shows.</p> <p>Beyond that, the China-based affiliates of Silicon Valley venture firms Sequoia Capital, Lightspeed Venture Partners, Matrix Partners and Redpoint Ventures have made at least 67 investments in Chinese chip-sector companies since the start of 2020, the Journal found.</p> <p>While the sums invested in many of the deals aren't disclosed, the investors participated in financing rounds that overall raised billions of dollars for China chip startups, the Journal found.</p> <p>The investment wave is hitting a flashpoint in the competition between the U.S. and China to dominate technologies they see as pivotal to future geopolitical primacy. Semiconductors underpin everything from mobile phones and autos to artificial intelligence and nuclear weapons, and since last year they have been in short supply around the globe.</p> <p>Alarmed by the spate of deals, some officials and lawmakers in Washington are considering closing gaps in regulation. National security adviser Jake Sullivan said in a speech in July that the Biden administration is "looking at the impact of outbound U.S. investment flows that could circumvent the spirit of export controls or otherwise enhance the technological capacity of our competitors in ways that harm our national security."</p> <p>Beijing is in the midst of a full-throttle, heavily subsidized drive to become self-sufficient in chips, and U.S. national-security officials and industry consultants said the U.S. investment is assisting that push.</p> <p>China's governing State Council and its Ministry of Industry and Information Technology didn't respond to requests for comment.</p> <p>"It's a capital-intensive sector, and capital matters to picking the winners," said Nathan Picarsic, co-founder of Horizon Advisory, a China-focused research and consulting firm.</p> <p>Overall, the U.S. companies investing in China's chip sector said those deals pale next to their domestic investments. Intel Capital, the chipmaker's venture-capital wing, said its China investments are less than 10% of the deals in a global portfolio designed to support its business and generate returns.</p> <p>Sequoia and Redpoint said the China deals were done by their China-based counterparts independent of the Silicon Valley offices and from separate funds. Lightspeed, via a spokeswoman, declined to comment. Matrix didn't respond to a request for comment.</p>

Washington has tried to stymie China's progress, placing [tougher controls on exports](#) of software, equipment and other technology used to make chips in recent years and crafting new policy and [plans to spend billions](#) to strengthen the U.S.'s edge in semiconductor manufacturing and design.

White House National Security Council officials have met with aides to Sens. Bob Casey (D., Pa.) and John Cornyn (R., Texas), who are sponsoring legislation that would screen outbound U.S. investments and the offshoring of critical supply chains and tech-industry resources to adversaries like China and Russia, one of the aides said.

The bill aims to scrutinize outbound investment currently not covered by export controls or the Committee on Foreign Investment in the U.S., an interagency panel that reviews deals with U.S. companies for national-security concerns.

"For too long, corporate interests have prioritized their bottom lines without regard to the broader American economy or our national security," Mr. Casey said in a statement.

Business groups including the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the U.S.-China Business Council are lobbying against the Casey-Cornyn bill, according to another congressional aide.

A spokesman for the U.S.-China Business Council said that "regulation of outbound capital flow is unprecedented in 250 years of American history" and that current export controls are sufficient to protect national security. The U.S. Chamber didn't respond to requests for comment.

Meanwhile, Beijing is turning to making more-advanced chips, focusing on areas of the semiconductor supply chain where China is weak and the U.S. is dominant, such as electronic design automation (EDA) software tools for designing and testing chips.

In August 2020, China's State Council upgraded a set of financial incentives that highlight EDA software companies, offering years of generous tax breaks.

That prospect of near-guaranteed government support is attracting the U.S. companies, China analysts and technology investors said. A chip startup, they said, would almost certainly be able to get government funding to boost its valuation and accelerate its growth or, at a minimum, keep it from going belly-up.

"China's semiconductor industry is an industrial-policy-driven bubble," said Thilo Hanemann, a partner with Rhodium Group, the research firm. He noted that published statistics from the U.S.'s Semiconductor Industry Association put the number of new Chinese semiconductor companies established in 2020 at more than 22,000, an increase of 200% from the year before.

In 2020, the number of China's chip-sector deals that U.S.-based venture capitalists and other private investors participated in hit an all-time high of 20, Rhodium found. There have been an average of 14 to 15 deals a year since 2017—a period when U.S. policy makers began trying to block China from investing in U.S. chip companies or buying their products. The prior four years, during which the U.S. was more open to Chinese investment, saw five or six such deals a year, according to the Rhodium data.

San Francisco-based Walden International is among the most prolific U.S. investors in Chinese semiconductors. During the 2017-20 period it made 25 investments in Chinese chip companies, according to the data, participating in more than 40% of the total deals Rhodium tracked.

Executives at Walden didn't respond to requests for comment. In a speech last month, Walden's managing director in China, Hing Wong, alluded to U.S.-China tensions, saying "the impact from various geopolitical events has in fact accelerated the upgrade of Chinese semiconductor companies."

The data Rhodium analyzed focuses on U.S.-domiciled entities making equity investments in China. It doesn't include other types of investment that national-security officials see as relevant, such as

investments by China-based affiliates of U.S. venture-capital firms or U.S. limited-partner contributions to Chinese funds.

Sequoia Capital's China unit has made at least 40 investments in Chinese chip-sector companies since 2020, the Journal found, including several aiming to build the advanced tech where the U.S. wants to preserve its lead. Those deals include investments in MetaX Integrated Circuits (Shanghai) Co. and Moore Threads Intelligent Technology Beijing Co., according to PitchBook. Both Chinese firms specialize in graphics-processing units, a chip technology that is used to train artificial intelligence and that U.S. company Nvidia Corp. dominates.

A spokeswoman for Sequoia Capital said that each of Sequoia's investing units, which invest in different geographies, has a separate team that makes its investment decisions independently under the Sequoia brand.

The startups backed by Sequoia Capital China have touted their high-profile funder and suggested the investment will be used to further Beijing's technology objectives. MetaX's founder and CEO, Chen Weiliang, said in a speech last month that the company is working with the government and others "to help our country get rid of its dependence on foreign high-performance chips," according to the company's account on the WeChat social-media service.

A post on Moore Threads's WeChat account seeking job candidates said that within just 100 days of its launch in October 2020, it raised billions of yuan from investors like Sequoia Capital China and that its "core members are mainly from Nvidia" and other top U.S. tech companies.

A MetaX spokeswoman asked the Journal to remove all mention of the company and its CEO from this article. Moore Threads didn't respond to requests for comment.

National-security specialists and venture capitalists with expertise in China say companies like Sequoia and Lightspeed can't sever themselves from their China-based counterparts. Chinese startups, they say, seek out these highly regarded firms for their U.S. connections, and the limited partners who invest in China-based funds often include U.S. investors. The Chinese funds of Sequoia and others can also lean on their U.S. flagships for operational expertise, relationships with U.S. customers and other resources.

"These are great brand names there," said Winston Ma, adjunct professor at New York University School of Law and a former executive at China's sovereign-wealth fund. "It's more about the glamour of the Sequoia headquarters than Sequoia China."

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HEADLINE	11/12 Germans urged: cancel, avoid big events
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/coronavirus-pandemic-angela-merkel-europe-germany-health-07596d4f924ed4937715a3c5bf5252a8
GIST	<p>BERLIN (AP) — Germany's disease control center is calling for people to cancel or avoid large events and to reduce their contacts as the country's coronavirus infection rate hits the latest in a string of new highs.</p> <p>The center, the Robert Koch Institute, said Friday that Germany's infection rate climbed to 263.7 new cases per 100,000 residents over seven days, up from 249.1 the previous day.</p> <p>Germany reported 48,640 new cases Friday, a day after the daily total topped 50,000 for the first time. Another 191 COVID-19 deaths brought Germany's total in the pandemic so far to 97,389.</p> <p>While the infection rate isn't yet as high as in some other European countries, its relentless rise in Germany has set off alarm bells. Outgoing Chancellor Angela Merkel plans to meet with the country's 16 state governors to coordinate nationwide measures next week, and parliament is mulling legislation that would provide a new legal framework for restrictions over the winter.</p>

“We must now do everything necessary to break this momentum,” Health Minister Jens Spahn told reporters. “Otherwise it will be a bitter December for the whole country.”

In its weekly report released late Thursday, the Robert Koch Institute said it “urgently advises canceling or avoiding larger events if possible, but also reducing all other unnecessary contacts.” If such events can’t be avoided, it added, people should take a test before attending, regardless of whether they are vaccinated.

The head of the institute, Lothar Wieler, said Friday that there are fewer usable hospital beds than at any time during the pandemic, with more than half of intensive care units reporting “acute staff shortages,” as they did during Germany’s previous peak in January.

In the worst-affected areas, he said, the number of people attending large events should be reduced or authorities should consider banning such events and closing bars or clubs.

Most German regions restrict access to many indoor facilities and events to people who have been vaccinated against the virus, have recovered from COVID-19 or recently received negative test results — with the latter category now being excluded in an increasing number of areas. But enforcement is often slack.

Germany has struggled to bring new momentum to its vaccination campaign lately, with a bit over two-thirds of the population fully vaccinated, and has balked so far at ordering vaccine mandates for any professional group. Officials also want to ensure more people who were inoculated months ago get booster shots.

Spahn said he will order the revival of free rapid COVID-19 tests, which were scrapped a month ago in an effort to persuade more people to get vaccinated, effective Saturday.

He said he favors limiting public events to the vaccinated and those who have recovered from COVID-19, and also requiring them to be tested beforehand.

Germany on Friday declared neighboring Austria, whose infection rate is far higher, a “high-risk area” effective Sunday. That means people arriving from Austria who haven’t been vaccinated or haven’t recovered recently from COVID-19 will have to go into quarantine.

The Czech Republic and Hungary also were added to the list of “high-risk areas,” but the United States was removed.

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HEADLINE	11/12 CDC shifts away from herd immunity goal
SOURCE	https://www.msn.com/en-us/health/medical/cdc-shifts-pandemic-goals-away-from-reaching-herd-immunity/ar-AAQCZMW
GIST	<p>Since the earliest days of the pandemic, there has been one collective goal for bringing it to an end: achieving herd immunity. That's when so many people are immune to a virus that it runs out of potential hosts to infect, causing an outbreak to sputter out.</p> <p>Many Americans embraced the novel farmyard phrase, and with it, the projection that once 70% to 80% or 85% of the population was vaccinated against COVID-19, the virus would go away and the pandemic would be over.</p> <p>Now the herd is restless. And experts at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have set aside herd immunity as a national goal.</p> <p>The prospects for meeting a clear herd-immunity target are "very complicated," said Dr. Jefferson Jones, a medical officer on the CDC's COVID-19 Epidemiology Task Force.</p>

“Thinking that we’ll be able to achieve some kind of threshold where there’ll be no more transmission of infections may not be possible,” Jones acknowledged last week to members of a panel that advises the CDC on vaccines.

Vaccines have been quite effective at preventing cases of COVID-19 that lead to severe illness and death, but none has proved reliable at blocking transmission of the virus, Jones noted. Recent evidence has also made clear that the immunity provided by vaccines can wane in a matter of months.

The result is that even if vaccination were universal, the coronavirus would probably continue to spread.

“We would discourage” thinking in terms of “a strict goal,” he said.

To Dr. Oliver Brooks, a member of the CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices, it was a sobering new message, with potentially worrisome effects.

With just 58.5% of all Americans fully vaccinated, “we do need to increase” the uptake of COVID-19 shots, said Brooks, chief medical officer of Watts Healthcare in Los Angeles. Unfortunately, he said, Jones' unexpected admission “almost makes you less motivated to get more people vaccinated.”

Brooks said he worries that as the CDC backs off a specific target for herd immunity, it will take the air out of efforts to run up vaccination levels.

And if public health officials stop talking about the “herd,” people may lose sight of the fact that vaccination is not just an act of personal protection but a way to protect the community.

A public tack away from the promise of herd immunity may also further undermine the CDC's credibility when it comes to fighting the coronavirus.

On issues ranging from the use of masks to how the virus spreads, the agency has made some dramatic about-faces over the course of the pandemic. Those reversals were prompted by new scientific discoveries about how the novel virus behaves, but they've also provided ample fuel for COVID-19 skeptics, especially those in conservative media.

“It’s a science-communications problem,” said Dr. John Brooks, chief medical officer for the CDC’s COVID-19 response.

“We said, based on our experience with other diseases, that when you get up to 70% to 80%, you often get herd immunity,” he said.

But the SARS-CoV-2 virus didn’t get the memo.

“It has a lot of tricks up its sleeve, and it’s repeatedly challenged us,” he said. “It's impossible to predict what herd immunity will be in a new pathogen until you reach herd immunity.”

The CDC's new approach will reflect this uncertainty. Instead of specifying a vaccination target that promises an end to the pandemic, public health officials hope to redefine success in terms of new infections and deaths — and they'll surmise that herd immunity has been achieved when both remain low for a sustained period.

“We want clean, easy answers, and sometimes they exist,” John Brooks said. “But on this one, we’re still learning.”

Herd immunity was never as simple as many Americans made it out to be, said Kathleen Hall Jamieson, director of the Annenberg Public Policy Center at the University of Pennsylvania and an expert on the

challenges of communicating science to increasingly skeptical — and often conspiracy-minded — citizens.

It's an idea that emerged about a century ago from the field of livestock medicine. Epidemiologists now calculate it with a standard equation. But like many tools that model a complex process with math, it makes some simplifying assumptions.

For instance, it assumes an unrealistic uniformity in the behavior of individuals and groups, and in the virus' ability to spread from person to person.

So it doesn't reflect the diversity of population density, living arrangements, transportation patterns and social interactions that makes Los Angeles County, for instance, so different from Boise County, Idaho. Nor does it account for the fact that Boise County, where less than 35% of adults are fully vaccinated, gets no protection from L.A. County's 73% vaccination rate among adults.

"Humans are not a herd," Jamieson said.

Public health leaders would have been better served by framing their vaccination campaigns around the need for "community immunity," she said. That would have gotten people to think in more local terms — the ones that really matter when it comes to a person's risk of infection, she added.

Changes in the coronavirus itself have also made herd immunity a moving target.

The calculation that produced a herd immunity estimate of 70% to 85% rests heavily on the innate transmissibility of SARS-CoV-2. But with the emergence of new viral strains like the Alpha and Delta variants, the virus' ability to jump from person to person has escalated dramatically in the last year.

In addition, herd-immunity calculations presume that when people gain immunity, they remain immune for a known period of time. But it's become clear that neither vaccination nor natural infection confers lasting protection. Booster shots or a "breakthrough" case might, but for how long is still unknown.

That's just the way science works, said Raj Bhopal, a retired public health professor at the University of Edinburgh who has written about the maddening complexity of herd immunity.

For any agency engaged in public messaging, "it's very hard to convey uncertainty and remain authoritative," Bhopal said. "It's a pity we can't take the public along with us on that road of uncertainty."

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HEADLINE	11/12 Colorado Covid spike 'still a mystery'
SOURCE	https://denver.cbslocal.com/2021/11/12/covid-surge-cases-trajectory-colorado-state-university/
GIST	<p>FORT COLLINS, Colo. (CBS4) – A team of statisticians from Colorado State University that has spent the pandemic helping the State of Colorado forecast spikes in COVID-19 cases says the recent surge in cases in Colorado is mysterious. While some cases can easily be tracked back, the overall surge that Colorado has seen in recent weeks hasn't been linked to one underlying factor.</p> <p>"I don't know if we will ever know what is causing this spike," said Dr. Bailey Fosdick, Associate Professor in CSU's Department of Statistics.</p> <p>Fosdick once spent most of her time studying analytics when it came to social media platforms. However, as the COVID-19 pandemic started, CSU was contacted and asked to help provide their experts in statistics in order to better track the trajectory of the pandemic in Colorado. The team has worked with the governor's office to help better understand where the state may be headed when it comes to positive COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations.</p> <p>"In the last two weeks, we started to see this big surge," Fosdick said.</p>

Fosdick said her team has worked to use computer analytics to not only document current cases of COVID-19 but to also attempt to forecast where that trajectory may head in the weeks and months ahead. However, in recent weeks the team has found it more difficult to accurately forecast where positivity rates may be headed.

One underlying factor is that health experts haven't been able to accurately pinpoint an exact cause of the spike. Some suggested it could be related to the weather in Colorado. Others suggested it could be linked to vaccination rates. However, when comparing those factors to other areas with similar environments, the numbers did not correlate.

"That is the big question right now, and in many cases, it is still a mystery," Fosdick said.

Fosdick said one factor impacting their ability to track positivity rates is the emergence of rapid at-home COVID-19 tests. While effective in helping diagnose COVID-19, a drastic majority of those using the at-home tests never report the numbers to the state for data purposes.

"The appearance of at-home rapid tests really changed things. People no longer needed to schedule something through UCHHealth or a hospital to have a quick test," Fosdick said. "Which is great, but that may never end up in our state dashboards."

Fosdick said the team of researchers has recently realized their ability to forecast the pandemic's strength in Colorado may not reach as far as they once hoped. Instead of attempting to forecast several weeks or months out, those involved are now focusing on the coming week or two ahead.

"We are doing our best just to say, 'What is needed in the next week?'" Fosdick said. "The takeaway message is that things do not look good. As individuals, we need to make our decisions based off that fact."

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HEADLINE	11/12 Borders open; tourism experts: still hurdles
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/us-travel-foreign-travel-tourists-new-york-11636664941?mod=hp_listc_pos2
GIST	<p>Tourism leaders at popular U.S. tourist destinations have let out a giant, collective cheer. As of this week, they can count on visitors from foreign countries with restrictions lifting.</p> <p>But even with citizens from 33 countries able to visit the States again, tourism experts are tempering that excitement with the warning that a full recovery for the travel sector will likely take years.</p> <p>"It's just not like the lights turn on, and all of a sudden everyone's back," says Chris Heywood, executive vice president at NYC & Company, the city's official tourism organization.</p> <p>As of Monday, tourists from the previously restricted countries can travel to the U.S., with most arrivals being required to show proof of full vaccination and a negative Covid-19 test. The countries formerly on the banned list, including the U.K. and Brazil, made up 53% of all overseas visitors to the U.S. in 2019, according to the U.S. Travel Association.</p> <p>New York is the top U.S. destination for international tourist bookings, followed by Miami, Los Angeles, Orlando, and San Francisco, according to Travelport, a global technology company.</p> <p>In many cities, international travelers make up a large share of tourism spending because they often stay longer and shop more than domestic tourists, tourism agency leaders say. Tourists to New York spent a record \$47.4 billion in 2019, with about 45% coming from international visitors, according to an economic study from research firm Tourism Economics. In 2021, tourism spending is expected to reach about \$24 billion, which reflects a decrease in both business and international travel, Mr. Heywood says.</p>

The return of international travelers will provide a boost to institutions that rely on them. Before the pandemic, approximately 64% of visitors to the Empire State Building Observatory were international travelers, according to surveys conducted in 2019.

From July to September this year, average visitation was at 24% of the comparable period in 2019, according to a recent earnings presentation from the Empire State Realty Trust. It is predicted to increase to 60% of comparable 2019 levels in December, the presentation says, and to 90% in the third quarter of 2022.

Ines Huidobro, 15 years old, and her cousin, Isabel De Los Rios, 23, waited outside the Empire State Building on Wednesday as a steady stream of tourists went inside for timed-ticketed entry. The pair traveled from Madrid on Monday with family to mark the anniversary of their grandfather's death. They threw flowers in the Hudson River then came to view the observatory and enjoy the view overlooking the city.

Cultural institutions are eager to have international visitors back. Before the pandemic, about one-third of visitors to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York were international, a spokesman says, and a strong day saw 20,000 visitors. Now, the museum has a reservation system and about 10,000 visitors on a weekend day, primarily from the U.S., he says.

Although international travel will boost New York's lodging reservations, it won't solve everything for those in the tourism industry, says Vijay Dandapani, president and chief executive officer of the Hotel Association of New York City. The revenue per available room, an industry metric known as RevPAR, in recent days was \$160 and citywide occupancy was 66%, he says. In October 2019, RevPAR was \$267, he says.

Mr. Dandapani says international travelers will likely help occupancy tick up a few percentage points this week, but more meaningful change will come when [international and domestic business travel picks up](#).

The lack of Chinese tourists, who can be subject to strict quarantine rules upon returning home, depending on the region, is also affecting the bottom line. International flights to and from China are operating at a fraction of their pre-pandemic schedule. Chinese tourists spend the most on average when they visit the city, at about \$3,000 a person, Mr. Dandapani says.

Cities say the boost from international tourism will help them bring back workers in the tourism industry. In Los Angeles County, more than 544,000 people were employed in tourism-related careers before the pandemic, according to Adam Burke, president and CEO of Los Angeles Tourism. Over one in three jobs were lost during the pandemic, he says—but more than 100,000 jobs have been recovered year over year. “With the return of international [travel], we’re hoping to get back to full employment over the next 12 to 18 months,” Mr. Burke says.

The Getty museums in Los Angeles County have seen an immediate increase in visits from international tourists in the days since the border reopened, based on vaccination checks when guests enter, a spokeswoman says. Visitor-services employees estimated at least 20% of guests were presenting international vaccine credentials, from countries including Sweden and France, she says.

This year, international tourists' spending in Los Angeles County will amount to about \$4 billion, Mr. Burke says. In 2019, international tourists spent \$11.6 billion. Los Angeles expects a strong recovery in visits by Japanese and South Korean tourists by the middle of next year, he says.

In the shorter term, expect crowds to increase in tourist hubs like Orlando. From October to November, airlines are adding 40,000 international seats there, and an additional 88,000 international seats from November to December, says Casandra Matej, president and CEO of Visit Orlando. But recovery will take time. In 2019, Orlando welcomed about 6.5 million international visitors, and forecasts 4.2 million for 2022.

	Large events like conventions also give cities reason for optimism. Currently, of the tens of thousands of registrants for CES, the world's largest consumer-electronics exhibition, 25% are international, according to the Consumer Technology Association, which owns and produces the show, which will be held in Las Vegas in January. The show went virtual during the pandemic, but in past years about one-third of attendees have been international.
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HEADLINE	11/12 US: possible Russia threat to Ukraine
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-briefs-allies-on-possible-russian-threat-toward-ukraine-11636756959?mod=lead_feature_below_a_pos1
GIST	<p>The Biden administration has briefed European allies in recent days about the potential for a new Russian military operation in Ukraine as Moscow continues to mass troops along the contested border in the latest escalation of tensions between the two neighbors, U.S. and European officials said.</p> <p>In briefings with North Atlantic Treaty Organization counterparts as well as individually with a number of European Union allies, U.S. officials shared concerns that Russia might try to take offensive action in the near future, the officials said.</p> <p>The briefings, based on U.S. intelligence assessments, were aimed partly at trying to get European allies to appeal to Russia to help de-escalate tensions, the officials said.</p> <p>The officials declined to give details of any evidence that the U.S. shared, but said there was no clear information pointing to a Russian attack, despite an increased Russian military presence recently at the border and an increase in cease-fire violations in eastern Ukraine.</p> <p>European capitals are watching the situation closely, the officials said. "I don't think the evidence is really that clear in either direction," said one European official. In Washington, Pentagon officials met Friday to discuss the issue and are watching developments intently, a U.S. official said.</p> <p>Ukrainian officials said the situation appeared less menacing and farther from the border than in April, when Russia amassed thousands of troops around its neighbor's territory. Russia claims Ukraine, a former Soviet republic, as part of its sphere of influence. Ukraine is seeking deeper integration with NATO and the EU.</p> <p>The Kremlin said that troop movements on its own territory were Russia's business alone, and that it would take national-security measures as it saw fit in response to NATO's military moves.</p> <p>"Russia does not pose a threat to anyone," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters. Bloomberg reported on the U.S. briefings on Thursday.</p> <p>The White House said there have been "extensive interactions" with European allies, including Ukraine, regarding reports of the Russian military buildup at the border with Ukraine.</p> <p>"As we've made clear in the past, and we've made clear directly to them as well, escalatory or aggressive actions by Russia would be of great concern to the United States," White House press secretary Jen Psaki told reporters Friday. "Obviously, our European conversations are about shared concern" regarding the Russian actions.</p> <p>Berlin and Paris in recent days have pressed the Kremlin to return to international talks to resolve the conflict in eastern Ukraine.</p> <p>On Friday, France's Foreign and Defense Ministers, Jean-Yves Le Drian and Florence Parly, issued a blunt statement after meeting their Russian counterparts, Sergei Lavrov and Sergei Shoigu, in Paris.</p>

	<p>“The two ministers expressed their concerns about the deteriorating security situation in Ukraine and clearly warned of the serious consequences of any further possible damage to the territorial integrity of Ukraine,” the statement by the French officials said.</p> <p>They called on Moscow to adhere to its commitments to remain transparent about its military movements and activities.</p> <p>Russia seized Crimea from Ukraine in 2014 and fomented a conflict in eastern Ukraine, sending troops covertly across the border to carve out two self-declared separatist statelets. Large-scale fighting ended in 2015, but cease-fires have been unstable and shooting continues across largely fixed front lines, adding to the around 14,000 deaths in the conflict.</p> <p>Mason Clark, a Russia analyst at the Institute for the Study of War in Washington, a nonpartisan research organization, said experts haven’t seen a new overt Russian buildup in recent weeks. But, he said, a shuffling of units that arrived in the region earlier this year could spell trouble.</p> <p>Mr. Clark said Moscow’s decision to keep the troops in the vicinity of Ukraine and Belarus, rather than return them to their home base in Siberia, could mean plans for an offensive. But, he added, it also could signal what the Kremlin sees as new geopolitical realities--namely that with worsening relations with the West, any Cold War-style front line lies near Ukraine and Belarus.</p> <p>“We still do not see an imminent attack on Ukraine,” he said. “But we do see many things are in place that could make it a possibility.”</p>
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HEADLINE	11/11 La Niña is coming to shape winter
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/la-nina-is-coming-to-shape-winter-forecasts-what-to-know-11636666122?mod=hp_trending_now_article_pos3
GIST	<p>The latest fluctuations in climate conditions across the Pacific Ocean are increasing the likelihood of a La Niña winter in the U.S., the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration said Thursday.</p> <p>NOAA predicts that water and air temperatures over the Pacific Ocean—closely watched metrics ahead of winter in the U.S.—have created La Niña conditions with a 90% chance of continuing through the winter and a 50% chance during the spring. The winter outlook is up from NOAA’s October forecast, when it predicted an 87% chance of La Niña conditions for December through February.</p> <p>The changes in wind movement and water temperature in the Pacific Ocean region that cause a La Niña have a pronounced effect on weather in the U.S. and around the world. Here is how this important weather phenomenon works.</p> <p>What is La Niña?</p> <p>La Niña is part of a shifting weather pattern known as the El Niño-Southern Oscillation. It occurs when unusually strong trade winds—equatorial winds from the east—push the Pacific Ocean’s warm surface waters west, toward Asia. This causes cold water to rise to the surface in the central and eastern Pacific Ocean.</p> <p>Warm air rises over the warm surface water and travels east over the cold water, creating a powerful atmospheric high-pressure region in the northern Pacific. This pressure system pushes the jet stream—strong air movement from west to east—farther north than usual for the winter. (Another aspect of the same pattern is called El Niño, which occurs when warm water accumulates in the same area of the equatorial Pacific because of weaker-than-normal trade winds.)</p> <p>A change in weather</p> <p>The North American jet stream forms where warm and cold air meet. In North America, the winds swoop down from Alaska toward the continental U.S. As the jet stream changes shape and location, it can have</p>

	<p>significant effects on weather, acting like a wall that keeps the region warm to the south and cold to the north.</p> <p>A La Niña winter, in which the high-pressure system over the northern Pacific pushes the jet stream north, allows warm, dry air to the south to move north and create unusually warm conditions in the West, potentially prolonging the Southwest's drought. Meanwhile, the Pacific Northwest can expect more precipitation and the northern U.S. could be colder than normal.</p> <p>Global impact</p> <p>While La Niña's impact is most pronounced in winter in North America, it can affect winds and air circulation around the globe. That can bring wetter-than-normal conditions to Australia, Indonesia, Colombia and Brazil, for example, but drier conditions to other countries.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/12 Beijing urges businesses to support China
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/nov/12/us-businesses-lobby-china-related-bills-congress
GIST	<p>China has been pushing US executives, companies and business groups in recent weeks to fight against China-related bills in the US Congress, four sources familiar with the initiative told Reuters, in letters to and meetings with a wide range of actors in the business community.</p> <p>Letters from China's embassy in Washington have pressed executives to urge members of Congress to alter or drop specific bills that seek to enhance US competitiveness, according to the sources and the text of a letter sent by the embassy's economic and commercial office seen by Reuters.</p> <p>Chinese officials warned companies they would risk losing market share or revenue in China if the legislation becomes law, according to the text of the letter.</p> <p>The Chinese embassy and the head of its economic and commercial office did not return separate requests for comment.</p> <p>The sources said China's request also left some individuals who received a letter concerned that they could be seen as violating the Foreign Agents Registration Act (Fara) if they lobbied lawmakers on similar issues in the future.</p> <p>As a result, none of the sources wanted to be identified as having received or seen the letter.</p> <p>Sweeping legislation to boost US competition with China and fund much-needed semiconductor production, known as the US Innovation and Competition Act (Usica), passed the Senate with bipartisan support in June. A related bill in the House of Representatives called the Eagle Act, which is more strictly policy-focused, has stalled as Congress has been preoccupied with other domestic initiatives.</p> <p>The language in the letters, which Reuters determined were sent separately to a wide number of people, explicitly asks companies to oppose Usica and the Eagle Act.</p> <p>Beijing sees the measures, which take a hard line toward China on human rights and trade issues, as part of a US effort to counter the country's growing economic and geopolitical might.</p> <p>"We sincerely hope you ... will play a positive role in urging members of Congress to abandon the zero-sum mindset and ideological prejudice, stop touting negative China-related bills, delete negative provisions, so as to create favorable conditions for bilateral economic and trade cooperation before it is too late," the Chinese embassy said in one letter sent in early November.</p> <p>Reuters confirmed the shared language of the letter with the four sources.</p>

	<p>“The result of those China-related bills with negative impacts will not be that the interests of US companies will be protected while those of Chinese companies will suffer. It is only going to hurt everyone,” it said.</p> <p>“Promoting a China-free supply chain will inevitably result in a decline in China’s demand for US products and American companies loss of market share and revenue in China,” it said.</p> <p>Two of the sources said similar messages were conveyed in meetings with staff of China’s embassy.</p> <p>“It’s an outright ask by a foreign government,” one of the sources said, highlighting the implications for Fara, which requires persons acting on behalf of a foreign power or political party to disclose those relations to the Department of Justice.</p> <p>A second source said the approach appeared geared at getting companies to delay the legislative process rather than block the bills entirely.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/12 Netherlands lockdown; cases hit new high
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/nov/12/partial-lockdown-in-netherlands-amid-record-covid-cases
GIST	<p>The Netherlands will become the first western European country to impose a partial lockdown since the summer, introducing strict new measures from Saturday in the face of record numbers of new Covid-19 infections.</p> <p>The restrictions, announced by the caretaker prime minister, Mark Rutte, on Friday, will last at least three weeks and include the closure of bars, restaurants and essential shops from 8pm, with non-essential retail and services such as hairdressers to close at 6pm.</p> <p>Gatherings at home would be limited to a maximum of four guests, all amateur and professional sporting events must be held behind closed doors, and home working was advised except in “absolutely unavoidable” circumstances, Rutte said.</p> <p>“We must reduce the number of contacts and infections as fast as possible,” Rutte said, calling the measures “unavoidable”. The healthcare system was already under such heavy pressure that knee, hip and even heart operations were being postponed.</p> <p>“Tonight we are bringing a very unpleasant message, with very unpleasant and far-reaching measures,” Rutte said.</p> <p>“The virus is everywhere and needs to be combated everywhere. I want every Dutch citizen to be asking, can I do more? Can I do better? We had hoped with the vaccines we wouldn’t have to do this, but we see the same situation all across Europe.”</p> <p>Schools, theatres and cinemas will remain open, as will conferences where the audience is seated, but public events such as trade fairs and exhibitions where the public can move around are cancelled from 6pm on Saturday.</p> <p>The health minister, Hugo de Jonge, said the government would next week debate legal changes to allow “exceptionally busy” stores and hospitality venues to choose whether they would accept only people who were fully vaccinated or had recovered, rather than also allowing access to people with a recent negative test.</p> <p>The lockdown is longer than the 14 days recommended this week by the government’s outbreak management team and comes as the number of new infections reaches record levels in the Netherlands.</p>

The country abandoned most preventive measures in late September, although as cases began to rise the government made face masks mandatory in shops and other public venues again last weekend.

Hospitals in the southern province of Limburg warned this week that the entire health system was “grinding to a standstill” in the country’s hardest-hit region, adding: “We are convinced that other parts of the Netherlands will soon follow.”

The Dutch public health institute announced the country’s highest daily tally of new infections since the pandemic began on Thursday, recording 16,364 new positive tests in 24 hours, an increase of 3,688 over the previous day. Friday’s toll was only fractionally lower.

The Dutch football federation and top two professional leagues expressed “great dismay” at the lockdown, which they described as “policy poverty”. They added that government officials “no longer know what to do”.

An organisation representing bar and restaurant owners condemned the government. “Hospitality businesses are again being presented with the bill for failing government policy,” the group said in a statement.

Until last month, the government had insisted the Netherlands’ comparatively high vaccination rate – 69% of the population is double jabbed, against an EU average of 65.8% – would mean it could relax remaining restrictions by the end of the year.

But as a fourth wave gathers pace in Europe, it is not alone in reintroducing stricter controls. The Austrian chancellor, Alexander Schallenberg, said on Friday his country would implement a lockdown for unvaccinated people in two hard-hit regions next week, and looks poised to move forward with similar measures nationwide.

From Monday, unvaccinated people in the regions of Upper Austria and Salzburg will only be allowed to leave home for specific necessary reasons, such as buying groceries or going to the doctor.

Germany, which has been reporting [record daily rates of new infections](#) on a seven-day average since the start of the week, is also urging people to cancel or avoid large events and to reduce their contacts.

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HEADLINE	11/12 Atmospheric river lashes Pacific Northwest
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/weather/2021/11/12/atmospheric-river-pacific-northwest-flooding/
GIST	<p>A barrage of atmospheric rivers in recent weeks has drenched the Pacific Northwest and Northern California, bringing widespread 30-day rain totals between 15 and 30 inches, debris flows, heavy mountain snows and mudslides. Another atmospheric river is soaking coastal Washington and northern Oregon, the latest in a relentlessly wet pattern that doesn’t look to budge anytime soon.</p> <p>Flood watches remain west of the Cascades and include cities such as Seattle, Tacoma and Portland. More than a dozen flood warnings are in effect as rivers overflow their banks, swollen from a month of copious to prolific rainfall.</p> <p>In Neskowin, Ore., near the Pacific Coast about 90 miles southwest of Portland, 50 people were being evacuated by helicopter from an RV Park Friday due to rising waters along the Neskowin Creek and the threat of mudslides, according to the U.S. Coast Guard.</p> <p>Another 2 to 6 inches of rain are possible out of the ongoing atmospheric river, but totals may approach a foot or more after yet another bout of storminess drags an atmospheric river into the region toward the middle of next week.</p>

The heaviest rain as of Friday morning was falling from just south of Seattle to near the Oregon border, with rainfall rates around a quarter-inch per hour. A second batch of steady rainfall was lurking just off the coast, and will be overspreading the region through about noon local time before a gradual decrease in precipitation intensity in the afternoon.

“We’re still under it,” said Miles Higa, a meteorologist at the National Weather Service in Portland. “Our precip rates aren’t quite as high as they were last evening, but it was enough to bring some of our coastal rivers to flood stage.”

Because atmospheric rivers carry the bulk of their moisture at the mid-levels, the heaviest rainfall is expected on the windward, or west-facing, side of any mountains — particularly along the Coastal Range and the Cascades. Those same areas have seen up to 2½ feet of rain in the past month.

“Some of our favored sites on the coastal mountains had briefly about half an inch per hour, but most of the area is seeing 0.15 to 0.25 inches per hour for several hours,” he said.

Flash flooding hasn’t been a significant concern — yet. Higa explained that though total amounts have been heavy, rainfall rates are more modest. That allows the ground to absorb water at roughly the same rate it falls.

“Some spots in the south Washington Cascades saw up to about four inches, but they can absorb quite a bit of water,” he said.

The plume of moisture has set records, including in Salem, Ore., where Friday morning’s weather balloon launch recorded a record PWAT, or precipitable water index. That’s a measure of how much moisture is present in a column of atmosphere. Salem measured a 1.45 inch PWAT; that’s the most ever observed this late in the season, and also beats out anything between mid-November and the end of May.

“Through the winter, these tend to be our heavier bursts of rain,” said Matthew Cullen, lead meteorologist at the National Weather Service in Seattle. “We get the progressive systems that dump some rain and move on, but in terms of sizable rainfall, it’s always the atmospheric rivers.”

The current atmospheric river corresponds to a Level 4 out of 5 [on a scale devised by the Center for Western Weather and Water Extremes](#). A new atmospheric river is expected to lash the Northwest this weekend, but will be narrower, briefer and less intense than its predecessors.

Significance

The atmospheric rivers bring welcome rainfall to the Pacific Northwest, but it’s not terribly advantageous for water resources in western Washington and northwest Oregon.

“We don’t rely quite as heavily on our snowpack to sustain our water throughout the spring as perhaps other parts of the West,” Higa said.

The atmospheric rivers are more beneficial when they extend farther south into Oregon and California, [which are suffering a serious drought](#). They are particularly helpful when they produce snowfall in the mountains that can be stored through the winter months.

The stormy conditions in the Pacific Northwest have a strong chance of continuing through the winter months, but how far south into California precipitation extends is more uncertain. During La Niña events, cooling waters in the tropical Pacific Ocean set off a chain reaction, which often steers storms toward the Pacific Northwest but don’t always offer a lot of precipitation farther south. The Weather Service [declared the arrival of La Niña in October](#) and forecasts that it will persist through the winter.

La Niña has helped the stormy season off to a fast start.

	<p>“It’s not unusual to see some back-to-back, but we’re only in the first half of November. It’s been one after another after another. It feels busier,” Cullen said.</p> <p>While there isn’t a firm link between climate change and the frequency of atmospheric river events, an increase in atmospheric temperatures allows the air to carry more water. Sacramento recorded more than 5.4 inches of rain in one day during a recent event, nabbing the city’s wettest day on record. Salem’s record-moist atmosphere was also consistent with influences from human-caused climate warming.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/13 Taiwan thanks NBA star, Australia support
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2021/11/13/taiwan-china-independence-enes-kanter/
GIST	<p>SEOUL — Taiwan’s November of intense public diplomacy continued Saturday, with its leader thanking Boston Celtics center Enes Kanter for his widely-publicized backing of the self-governing island, shortly after Australia’s defense minister said it was “inconceivable” that Canberra would not aid Washington in a potential defense of Taiwan.</p> <p>Kanter recently made headlines for videos criticizing Chinese President Xi Jinping, in which he voiced support for ethnic minorities under Beijing’s repressive rule, and the beleaguered pro-democracy movement in Hong Kong. And on Saturday, he released a clip in which he said that “Taiwan is not part of China.”</p> <p>Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen said in a video response that she appreciated the basketball star’s advocacy and pledged to “always defend our hard-earned freedom and democracy.” She also noted that Taiwan had many fans of the sport, in a seeming allusion to Kanter’s attack on Nike for being relatively silent on human rights issues in China, which is a key market for the sportswear giant.</p> <p>Nike has said it does not source products or supplies from Xinjiang, the Chinese region where there has been a brutal state-sponsored campaign of repression against the Uyghur minority.</p> <p>Taiwan’s heightened effort to promote its democratic status is an attempt to raise its profile as a distinct entity from China, which claims the island as part of its sovereign territory, said Ja Ian Chong, an Asia security expert at the National University of Singapore. “So much of the outward push by Beijing is to diminish Taiwan’s status [but] people are more aware now that it is different.”</p> <p>Many members of Tsai’s ruling Democratic Progressive Party explicitly support Taiwanese independence, though the President has staked a more middle ground. China, for its part, has promised to “smash” Taiwan in the event of a formal declaration of independence.</p> <p>Beijing has reacted harshly to criticism of its policies involving Taiwan and Hong Kong, which it considers to be part of its many “red lines.” The Chinese Foreign Ministry previously dismissed Kanter’s past comments on Tibet as “clout chasing” and said that they were not worth rebutting — even as the country wiped the Celtics from NBA broadcasts.</p> <p>Beijing views self-governing Taiwan as part of the People’s Republic, though the Communist regime has never controlled the island. Their Nationalist rivals fled to Taiwan, which is separated from China by about 100 miles of water, after losing a long and bloody civil war in 1949. The island developed into a vibrant democracy after decades of authoritarian Nationalist rule, but China has increasingly threatened Taipei, with Xi sending record numbers of warplanes near Taiwan.</p> <p>The United States severed formal diplomatic ties with the Republic of China, Taiwan’s official name, in 1979, to set up relations with the People’s Republic of China. Washington is bound by legislation to help Taiwan defend itself, including through arms sales, but the Taiwan Relations Act does not specifically say the United States must support the island in case of war.</p>

President Biden has vowed to defend the island from potential Chinese incursion, in a promise that was an apparent contradiction of America's longtime strategic ambiguity. The White House later clarified that the policy had not changed.

In an interview published late Friday, Australian defense minister Peter Dutton said that it "would be inconceivable that we wouldn't support the US in an action if the US chose" to militarily defend Taiwan.

"I think we should ... look at all of the facts and circumstances without pre-committing, and maybe there are circumstances where we wouldn't take up that option, [but] I can't conceive of those circumstances," Dutton, a leader of the conservative Liberal Party's right wing, [told](#) the Australian newspaper.

Canberra has a defense alliance with Washington and Australia recently inked a [landmark nuclear submarine pact](#) with Britain and the United States that was widely seen as targeted at China. Australia's relations with China have [significantly worsened](#) in recent years.

The minister's statement "underscores what many have taken for granted," said Chong, the Singapore professor. Dutton did not specify the nature of potential Australian assistance, though Chong suggested that recent "pressure and punishment" by Beijing could push Canberra to be more active.

Dutton's pledge came several months after a senior Japanese defense official [said](#) that Tokyo had "to protect the Taiwan as a democratic country." The United States and Japan are also in a long-standing defense alliance.

Taiwan [welcomed](#) a delegation of U.S. lawmakers earlier this week, in a move that drew a sharp rebuke from Beijing. Members of the European Parliament, led by prominent Beijing critic Raphaël Glucksmann, also visited the island in November.

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HEADLINE	11/12 Oregon coast flooding prompts evacuations
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/12/us/oregon-flood-evacuation.html
GIST	<p>Twenty people were rescued from a recreational vehicle park near the Oregon coast after rising creek waters flooded the area on Friday, officials said.</p> <p>The only bridge in and out of the Neskowin Creek R.V. park along Highway 101, the main north-south route along the Pacific Northwest, was flooded after the creek overflowed following record-breaking rain, Gordon McCraw, the emergency manager for Tillamook County, said.</p> <p>U.S. Coast Guard crews airlifted 12 people and three dogs from the R.V. park and local agencies evacuated eight other people. About 30 people decided to remain in the park, the Coast Guard said.</p> <p>All of those rescued were adults and no medical help was needed, according to the Coast Guard, which deployed two helicopters and a rescue swimmer to help the Tillamook County Sheriff's Office.</p> <p>Those who opted for an evacuation were taken to a school about 100 miles southwest of Portland, Ore.</p> <p>Most of Oregon and Western Washington State have had what is known as an atmospheric river cruising through the region since Wednesday evening, causing Oregon's coast to get an "abnormal" amount of rain, Colby Newman, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service, said on Friday.</p> <p>Atmospheric rivers are rivers in the sky that move water vapor outside of tropical areas, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Columns of vapor move with winds, and once the vapor hits a warm front to condense it, rain is created.</p> <p>Atmospheric rivers differ from conventional storms because there are no strong perpendicular winds to help move rain clouds along. Instead, winds run parallel to the clouds, keeping them sandwiched and</p>

	<p>stagnant over one area for hours, causing floods because they do not allow the rain clouds to move quickly.</p> <p>The areas between the coastal communities of Lincoln City and Pacific City, Ore., have had five to 10 inches of rain in the last 48 hours.</p> <p>The region usually gets at most three to four inches during a heavy rain, Mr. Newman said. This has made the region's creeks and rivers rise rapidly along the steep coast.</p> <p>"We have pretty hilly terrain, so water doesn't get easily soaked in," Mr. Newman said, adding that the ground was saturated after a rainy fall.</p> <p>The National Weather Service issued a flood warning for most of Washington and the Oregon coast into Sunday, although perpendicular winds will move the rain south and give flooded areas some respite, Mr. Newman said.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/12 Concern: possible Europe military conflict
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/12/world/europe/threats-troop-buildup-war.html
GIST	<p>It has all the makings of a Cold War thriller.</p> <p>A mercurial dictator and sometime proxy of Russia using people as political weapons against the West. A war of words between the strongman and his Western rivals. Moscow, shadowy in its intentions, deploying nuclear-capable bombers and staging paratroop drills in the area.</p> <p>In a region where memories of East-West divisions run deep, the standoff between Belarus's leader, Aleksandr G. Lukashenko, and Poland, a European Union and NATO member, is fueling concerns about possible military conflict, however unlikely.</p> <p>Belarusian leaders have repeatedly raised that prospect.</p> <p>"We know that if we make some mistake, God forbid, if we slip up, this will instantly involve Russia in this whirlpool," Mr. Lukashenko told state television. "This is the largest nuclear power," he added. "I'm not a madman, I understand where this can go."</p> <p>Belarus's state news agency quoted its defense minister on Friday as saying: "We are getting the impression that our western neighbors, Poland in particular, are ready to start a conflict."</p> <p>"We would like to caution hot heads from overestimating their capabilities," he added. And he, too, explicitly raised the possibility of Russian involvement.</p> <p>Polish officials have also resorted to overheated language, describing the presence of a few thousand asylum seekers just outside their borders as an assault on the nation and its sovereignty. Poland says it has moved some 17,000 soldiers, border guards and police officers to the border to keep migrants from crossing.</p> <p>Russia held snap military exercises with Belarus on Friday, dropping paratroopers into the border region. Two suffered fatal injuries, the Russian defense ministry reported.</p> <p>The E.U. is furious after Mr. Lukashenko orchestrated the movement of thousands of Middle Eastern migrants to its eastern frontiers, with the border between Poland and Belarus becoming an increasingly volatile flash point.</p> <p>While 2021 is far removed from the violent perils of the Cold War era, the geopolitics of the region can still be fragile.</p>

The backdrop of the latest crisis matters because it is playing out along the borders of Poland, Lithuania and Belarus in an area long viewed by NATO as one of [its most vulnerable flanks](#) in the event of Russian aggression.

The 64-mile-wide stretch of land known as the Suwalki corridor forms the border between Poland and Lithuania, and the only land route between the Baltic States — Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, all members of NATO and the E.U. — and their allies. That thin link is sandwiched between the heavily militarized Russian exclave of Kaliningrad and Moscow's ally Belarus.

Under NATO's founding treaty, an attack against one member is considered an attack against all. According to Poland's ministry of defense, there are currently about 4,000 U.S. troops and 1,000 other NATO troops stationed in Poland. There are also [about 4,000 NATO troops](#) in the Baltic States, while Britain has sent a small team of armed forces personnel to Poland to provide support.

Mr. Lukashenko, a onetime collective pig farm director, has resorted to a long-established practice of falling back on his ties to Moscow — military and otherwise. This week, he raised the prospect of shutting off a pipeline carrying natural gas from Russia to Western Europe.

Russia, an ally of Belarus, has made it clear that its support of Mr. Lukashenko is far from assured — with the Kremlin saying emphatically on Friday that it will not allow Belarus to disrupt the flow of gas to Europe.

Poland's prime minister, Mateusz Morawiecki, this week accused Belarus of political "blackmail."

The Pentagon has in recent years stepped up training rotations and exercises in the territory of newer NATO allies in the east, including along the narrow corridor of rolling Polish farmland near the Lithuanian border.

In the unlikely event of a land war, American and allied officers say, the region is where Russia or its proxies could cut off the Baltic States from the rest of Europe. Since 2014, when Russia annexed Crimea and began supporting separatists fighting in eastern Ukraine, Eastern Europe has felt increasingly vulnerable.

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HEADLINE	11/13 Young Canadians flock to Atlantic Canada
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/13/world/canada/newfoundland-migrants.html
GIST	<p>BONAVISTA, Newfoundland — Only a few years ago in Bonavista, a small and sleepy windswept fishing town in Newfoundland, dozens of pastel-colored heritage homes facing the sea sat dilapidated and empty.</p> <p>The collapse of the cod industry had pushed about 1,000 residents to seek their fortunes in places like Texas, New York and oil-rich Alberta, about 4,000 miles away.</p> <p>These days, however, so many migrants are arriving from across Canada — mostly young professionals from big cities like Toronto — that some local developers have a three-year waiting list for home buyers.</p> <p>Sam Yuen, 40, a communications manager for a bank, who recently moved to Bonavista from Toronto with his partner, Derek McCallum, an architect, snapped up a three-bedroom, early-20th-century home for about \$30,000. "We love the nature and the sense of belonging here," Mr. Yuen said.</p> <p>Until recently, Canada's Atlantic provinces were suffering from so much outward migration that some towns started offering free land to lure workers. But as urban life across the world has been upended by the coronavirus, with lockdowns, shuttered bars and socially distanced gyms, the picturesque region is experiencing the largest inward migration in nearly 50 years.</p>

Desperate to escape pandemic doldrums and soaring housing prices, and energized by a global shift to remote working, the newcomers are flocking to Atlantic Canada, where they have been largely welcomed. But in the distinctive coastal region — shaped by the traditional values of its Indigenous peoples and Irish, Scotch, English and French settlers — the migration of moneyed urbanites is also fanning some tensions.

Though housing prices remain low compared with bigger urban centers, in Bonavista, population 3,752, they are exploding, and some local residents bemoan the higher property taxes that come with them.

The social fabric of the town has also been changing. Traditional craft shops and restaurants offering fish and brewis, a starchy local dish of cod and bread, have been gradually giving way to designer [sea salt companies](#) and to purveyors of [cumin kombucha](#) and [iceberg-infused soap](#).

Bonavista, influenced historically by its churches, now hosts a growing L.G.B.T.Q. community, including a bisexual mayor and a lesbian police chief, stoking some resentment among a minority about the town's tilt toward social liberalism.

The mayor, John Norman, 36, was born in the town. A modernizer with a taste for haute couture, he is called the "Baron of Bonavista." Mr. Norman, who was recently re-elected, has been known to preside over town meetings in an Alexander McQueen jacket adorned with black feathers.

To help accommodate the newcomers, Mr. Norman, a real estate developer, is spearheading the restoration of nearly 100 homes.

"The pandemic is helping to revive the town," said Mr. Norman, who lives with his partner, Guillaume Lallier, in a 120-year-old house filled with masterpieces of Canadian art.

[Rob Greenwood](#), a regional development expert at Memorial University in St. John's, Newfoundland's capital, said the arrival of "come from awayers," as they are known in Newfoundland, was a boon to Canada's easternmost province. Its remoteness had historically undermined its ability to attract outside talent and investment.

"The come from awayers are arriving with knowledge and networks and money," Mr. Greenwood said.

[Called "the rock"](#) because of its rugged coastlines, the island of Newfoundland was variously a British colony and an independent country before it joined the Canadian confederation in 1949. It has long prided itself on its singular culture, including a [distinct vernacular](#) and barroom customs, like kissing a cod to become an honorary Newfoundlander.

Newfoundlanders' plucky hospitality was popularized in the [Broadway musical "Come From Away,"](#) which portrays the true story of how a small town mobilized to welcome 6,700 travelers after 38 planes were diverted there after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks.

In Newfoundland, taxi drivers greet customers with a jovial, "Whaddayat?" — "How's it going?" — while the province's tourism agency promotes proud towns and villages with names like Come by Chance, Witless Bay and [Dildo](#).

Bonavista, graced with a scenic harbor and a lighthouse sitting on a noirish stretch of rocky cliffs, is about a three-and-a-half hour drive from St. John's.

"Some have referred to Bonavista as the real Schitt's Creek," mused Mr. Norman, referring to the name of the fictional town in the wildly popular, Emmy-award winning [Canadian series "Schitt's Creek."](#) The show features a rich couple and their bisexual son and socialite daughter who have fallen on hard times and find an unexpected sense of community in a tiny rural town.

For pandemic pilgrims leaving behind frenetic urban lives, there can be some culture shock.

Mr. Yuen observed that he was one of a handful of Asian Canadians in Bonavista, and he missed dim sum outings in Toronto. But Bonavista has been able to achieve something few urban centers have: zero cases of Covid-19 and no lockdowns, in line with low infection rates across the region. Neighbors also stop by with offerings of moose meat, while his backyard is an expansive ocean.

The couple are currently shuttling between Bonavista and Toronto, and plan to eventually move permanently to Bonavista. “The pandemic has lessened the fear of missing out on things back home,” Mr. Yuen said.

There have been other unexpected surprises. In August, a Pentecostal preacher in Bonavista held an outdoor service during which he blasted a sermon on loudspeakers railing against abortion and same-sex marriage.

The sermon, [captured on video](#), prompted a backlash and complaints. Town officials, in turn, asked the church to lower the volume. The church did not respond to requests for comment.

Some residents also complained on social media after officials installed three rainbow-colored benches in the town to show support for the L.G.B.T.Q. community.

Mr. Yuen stressed that in Bonavista, he and his partner had felt warmly welcomed, but said that the sermon had unnerved them. “In Toronto,” he said, “we lived in a liberal bubble.”

Carrie Freestone, an economist at Royal Bank of Canada, who wrote a [recent report on](#) the migration phenomenon, said it began about five years ago and had been “supercharged” by the pandemic.

According to Statistics Canada, about 33,000 people from other provinces migrated to the region of 2.5 million people in the first half of this year alone, compared with about 18,500 in the same period in 2005.

Many of the new arrivals are millennials, Ms. Freestone said, motivated by the new [“You only live once” economy](#). Some were filling important labor gaps in Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick and Newfoundland, including in the technology and health care sectors.

Reg Butler, a crab fisherman, whose family has been in Bonavista for five generations, credited the newcomers for rejuvenating the local economy after the town emptied in the 1990s following a moratorium on cod fishing. But he said a housing shortage was stoking some resentment.

“Locals are finding it hard to find affordable housing, and some are concerned,” he said. “The come from awayers also have to adapt to our way of life.”

According to Mr. Norman, the cost of a house in Bonavista had increased, on average, by 70 percent in the past five years to \$180,000. There is so much demand for housing, the town recently asked Habitat for Humanity to help build more affordable homes.

The search for rural idylls is also affecting other Atlantic provinces.

Stefan Palios, a business consultant, and his partner, Marty Butler, a registered nurse, both 29, recently traded in their cramped one-bedroom Toronto apartment for an imposing seven-bedroom Victorian house mansion in the tight-knit town of Windsor, Nova Scotia, which they bought this past year for about \$280,000.

This year, at least 20 come from awayers have settled and invested in Windsor, a former shipbuilding town of about 5,000 that claims to be the birthplace of ice hockey. A Vancouver transplant opened a sign language interpretation business. A data analyst from Montreal is analyzing sports team performances. And Mr. Butler got a job as an organ transplant nurse in nearby Halifax, Nova Scotia’s capital.

	<p>But the couple were also inundated with hundreds of angry messages when they began posting about their home renovation on TikTok. Some Nova Scotians accused them of making housing unaffordable and told them to go home. “You’re what every single Nova Scotian hates right now,” wrote one.</p> <p>Mr. Palios is philosophical about the blowback. “People have their way of life,” he said, “and they don’t want you to come and destroy it.”</p>
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HEADLINE	11/12 Vietnam experiencing labor shortage
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/12/business/vietnam-workers-covid.html
GIST	<p>Thu Trang traveled to Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, in 2019, ecstatic to get a job at a factory. She worked eight-hour shifts and was guaranteed overtime pay, and the wages were nearly triple what she had made as a farmer back home.</p> <p>But during a Covid-19 outbreak this summer, the factory where she worked making Adidas, Converse and New Balance shoes virtually shut down. She and her co-workers were forced to live in a cramped apartment for nearly three months, subsisting on a diet of rice and soy sauce. In October, when restrictions loosened as global supply chain issues surged, Thu Trang decided she would pack up and return to her home province, Tra Vinh.</p> <p>Her manager promised her higher wages, but she didn’t bother to find out how much.</p> <p>“Even if the company doubles or triples our wages, I insist on moving back home,” said Thu Trang, who asked to be identified only by her first name because she feared retribution from her company and the government. “Ho Chi Minh City was once a destination where we sought our future, but this is no longer a safe place.”</p> <p>Just last year, Vietnam’s coronavirus controls were lauded by health officials around the world. The country was so successful that it achieved the highest economic growth in Asia last year, at 2.9 percent. That outlook has dimmed: Workers have fled their factories, managers are struggling to get them back, and economists are forecasting that a full recovery in output won’t come until next year.</p> <p>For consumers, the worker shortage is likely to worsen the delays for global manufactured goods caused by a worldwide shipping crisis and monthslong factory shutdowns in the Southeast Asian country. It could mean a longer wait for Nike sneakers, Lululemon yoga pants and Under Armour tank tops before the holidays. Several American retailers have already switched to suppliers in China to ease the crunch.</p> <p>In 2020, Vietnam kept a lid on infections. Officials relied on strict quarantine measures, contact tracing and lockdowns. They assumed that they had time to order vaccines, until infections and deaths surged in the summer with the arrival of the Delta variant.</p> <p>Officials in Ho Chi Minh City and Binh Duong told factories that workers had to comply with the “three on site” model, which meant that eating, living and working needed to be done within the factory’s premises.</p> <p>Factory managers scrambled to provide tents and toilets for their workers, who were crammed in warehouse buildings or parking lots. Local media reported that hundreds of workers in several factories became infected. Many businesses felt they could not bear the costs of housing their workers, so they shut down production. Suddenly, thousands of workers found themselves with no income.</p> <p>Do Quynh Chi, director of the Research Center for Employment Relations, which researches labor trends in Vietnam, said 60 percent of the 300 workers she interviewed in the last week of September told her they wanted to return to their home villages after realizing they lacked a safety net in the city.</p>

“They want to recover emotionally,” Ms. Do said. “After 10 weeks of lockdown, they are totally exhausted.”

The problem has shaken an industry that has grown to become the world’s second-largest supplier of apparel and footwear after China. In the past decade, international brands flocked to Vietnam, drawn by a relatively stable government, low costs and workers who were renowned for their sewing skills.

In recent years, the country was also a beneficiary of the U.S.-China trade war, which forced American companies to look elsewhere for their overseas manufacturing operations.

The labor shortage today is most keenly felt in the south. Known as the “locomotive” of the country, Ho Chi Minh City and Binh Duong Province are home to two of Vietnam’s largest industrial parks. Roughly 1.3 million workers left for their hometowns from July to September, according to government data.

After restrictions were loosened in October, “hundreds of thousands” of workers followed, according to local officials.

In Ho Chi Minh City, the total number of workers in export processing zones and industrial parks is now about 135,000, down 46 percent, according to Pham Duc Hai, a senior official in charge of Covid-19 prevention efforts in Ho Chi Minh City.

Managers have made calls promising higher wages to get the workers to return. On Oct. 22, the Ho Chi Minh City government said it would provide free transportation and accommodations for the first month to workers who were willing to come back.

The measures have had some success. Ninety percent of the work force of Pouyuen Vietnam has returned to Ho Chi Minh City, according to Cu Phat Nghiep, the chairman of the company’s trade union.

But Doan Thi Bich Tram has made up her mind not to come back. “Why would we stay after they had left us in our most difficult time in the midst of the pandemic?” said Ms. Doan, 29, who sews gloves for the Hung Way factory, a supplier to Patagonia and other brands.

Ms. Doan said that when the government imposed coronavirus restrictions, she went days without food and received only about \$130 for August and September from local authorities. The subsidy was not enough for her to pay rent. She said she was waiting for the company to approve her resignation.

“My trust in the authorities has vanished,” she said. “They failed to control the pandemic effectively, causing many to die from infection and to live in hunger.”

Retailers in the United States have warned about the production delays in Vietnam, which could affect [the deliveries of gifts during the Christmas season](#).

Nike cut its 2022 revenue growth forecast, saying in September that it had lost 10 weeks of production because 80 percent of its footwear factories were in the south of Vietnam and nearly half of its apparel factories in the country were closed.

On earnings calls, Chico’s, a women’s clothing maker based in Florida, and Callaway, the golf company, said they had moved some of their production out of Vietnam.

Adam Sitkoff, the executive director of the American Chamber of Commerce in Vietnam, said many companies were looking for workarounds and other remedies to help ease the stress.

“American companies are seeing what they can do,” Mr. Sitkoff said. “If we charter buses and send them to whatever province and hometown, will that help us get the people back?”

American businesses have pushed the Vietnamese government to speed up its vaccine program, which they say is essential for workers to feel safe. Only 29 percent of the population has been fully inoculated,

	<p>one of the lowest rates in Southeast Asia. Vietnam says it hopes to fully vaccinate 70 percent of its population by the end of the year.</p> <p>Nguyen Huyen Trang, a 25-year-old worker for Changshin Vietnam, a major supplier for Nike, is fully vaccinated but said she still feared being back on the factory floor. Ms. Nguyen and her husband returned to their home in Ninh Thuan, a province in central Vietnam, from Dong Nai when cases there started soaring at the end of July. Her husband wants to go back to the city, but her family is pressuring her to stay.</p> <p>She said her manager called her in October and offered to increase her wages if she returned. Her response, she said, was “a definite head-shaking no.”</p>
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HEADLINE	11/12 Test of Russia uneasy alliance with Belarus
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/12/world/europe/lukashenko-putin-belarus-russia.html
GIST	<p>MOSCOW — As European governments threatened Belarus with deeper sanctions this week for fomenting the migration crisis on the Belarusian-Polish border, its bombastic leader countered with what sounded like a trump card: he could stop the flow of gas to the West.</p> <p>There was just one problem: It wasn't his gas to stop.</p> <p>So on Friday, Russia — which sends much of its gas to Europe via Belarus — had to set the record straight for the Belarusian president, Aleksandr G. Lukashenko.</p> <p>“Russia was, is and will remain a country that fulfills all of its obligations in supplying European customers with gas,” the spokesman for President Vladimir V. Putin told reporters.</p> <p>With thousands of migrants still stranded in the frigid cold on the edge of the European Union — encouraged by Belarus to go there but barred by Poland, an E.U. member, from crossing its border — the complex relationship between two allied autocrats looms large over the crisis. The mixed messaging over Russia's natural gas exports was the latest sign that even as Mr. Putin continues to back Mr. Lukashenko, it is the Belarusian leader — a strongman who once ran a Soviet collective farm — who keeps raising the stakes.</p> <p>Mr. Lukashenko's Belarus is Russia's only full-fledged ally in Eastern Europe, the region that Moscow has long seen as its most important sphere of influence. That gives him outsize leverage with Mr. Putin, even though his country of nine million people has a fraction of the size — let alone the military might — of its eastern neighbor.</p> <p>Now, with tensions between Belarus and the West reaching their highest level since Mr. Lukashenko brutally suppressed a popular uprising last year, some allies of the Kremlin say Russia is getting drawn into a crisis not of its choosing.</p> <p>“We cannot allow the tail to wag the dog,” Konstantin Zatulin, a senior Russian lawmaker from Mr. Putin's party who specializes in relations with post-Soviet countries, said in an interview. “Lukashenko psychologically wants to be the victor — it is his desire to be a macho. Between that desire and our policies, there is a difference that must be seen.”</p> <p>Mr. Lukashenko's gambit — Western officials have accused him of orchestrating the flow of migrants to the border — has underscored the uneasy alliance between his government and its powerful Russian ally.</p> <p>Last spring, facing a storm of international outrage over the forced landing of a European passenger jet with a Belarusian dissident on board, Mr. Lukashenko seemed to have no choice but to bow to his Kremlin benefactors and to assent to deeper integration with them.</p>

But six months later, Mr. Lukashenko has wrapped up long-running talks with Mr. Putin without appearing to cede much Belarusian sovereignty, and he is again leaving the Kremlin no choice but to double down in its support.

“People in Moscow are totally sick and tired of Lukashenko,” said Sergei Markov, a pro-Kremlin analyst. “He is the cleverest of negotiators.”

On Friday, in a show of solidarity, Russia flew paratroopers to the vicinity of Belarus’s border with Poland for exercises with Belarusian soldiers. Two paratroopers died from injuries suffered in the exercises, the Russian Defense Ministry said. Earlier in the week, Russia twice sent nuclear-capable bombers on patrols to the same region.

The Belarus defense minister, Viktor Khrenin, asserted that Belarusian and Russian intelligence information showed that E.U. neighbors, especially Poland, had taken military actions that [suggested they were ready to “start a conflict.”](#)

But even some critics of Mr. Lukashenko and Mr. Putin believe that at some point, the Kremlin will try to pull Belarus back from confrontation.

“I think that in this specific crisis, the impulse to wrap it up will come via Russia,” said Artyom Shraibman, a Belarusian scholar for the Carnegie Moscow Center who was forced to flee Belarus this year. “For Russia, escalation will get uncomfortable.”

In the current crisis, Mr. Lukashenko’s goal is simple, if far-fetched, analysts say: to force the European Union — which sees him as an illegitimate president — to negotiate with him and to drop its sanctions. A senior E.U. official said on Friday that the bloc had “no information” indicating that Mr. Putin had instigated the migrant crisis, but criticized Russia for not influencing Belarus to stop it.

For now, the Kremlin appears content to let Europe struggle with Mr. Lukashenko on its own. Though Mr. Putin spoke with Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany twice this week, Russian officials continue to insist that the Europeans must speak to Belarus directly.

With pressure mounting to end the border crisis, [several airlines on Friday said](#) they were limiting flights to Belarus from the Middle East, where most of the migrants have traveled from. They include Turkish Airlines, one of the largest carriers to offer flights to Minsk, the Belarusian capital.

At the same time, aid groups described dire conditions for migrants huddled at the border, struggling against the cold and threats of violence. One Iraqi couple and a Syrian man were beaten and robbed, according to the activist coalition Grupa Granica.

The migration crisis comes amid the backdrop of rising tensions between Russia and Belarus’s southern neighbor, Ukraine — a onetime Russian ally that broke away in its pro-Western revolution in 2014. Ukraine’s turn looms large for Moscow, a cautionary tale that the Kremlin is determined not to repeat.

“Putin took Crimea, which is very good, but Putin lost Ukraine,” Mr. Markov, the pro-Kremlin analyst, said. “If he also loses Belarus, he will never be forgiven for it.”

Mr. Lukashenko has ruled Belarus since 1994, and for years profited from the competition between Russia and the West for influence in his country, provoking deep frustration in Moscow. That game ended last year, when he declared a landslide re-election victory in a vote widely seen as fraudulent, leading the E.U. to impose sanctions that continue to rankle him.

With Mr. Lukashenko’s opponents seen as too pro-Western, the Kremlin backed him despite its reservations — saving Mr. Lukashenko’s regime but saddling Mr. Putin with an ever-more-erratic ally.

In Moscow, many expected the Kremlin's backing to translate into tighter integration into a "union state" between Russia and Belarus that would have magnified Mr. Putin's geopolitical sway. But those talks ended earlier this fall without an agreement on a common currency or legislature — signaling that Mr. Lukashenko was able to retain his independence.

Mr. Putin and Mr. Lukashenko, both in their late 60s, share a worldview focused on a two-faced, decadent West. Both have overseen harsh crackdowns on dissent in the last year. The 2020 uprising against Mr. Lukashenko in a neighboring, Russian-speaking country spooked the Kremlin, Russian analysts say, and helped prompt Mr. Putin's decision to dismantle the movement of the opposition leader Aleksei A. Navalny.

Mr. Lukashenko's approach toward migration shows how he has sought to maneuver between Russia and the West. In 2018, he boasted that his country's border guards were significantly reducing the trafficking of migrants and drugs into the European Union. In recent months, he has swerved the other way, with Western officials saying he has orchestrated a wave of migration through the Minsk airport toward his country's borders, hoping to embarrass the E.U. into legitimizing him.

On the ground in Minsk, the human toll of that strategy is evident.

When large numbers of asylum seekers began arriving over the summer, a rights activist in Minsk said, they came as part of organized tour groups with reservations at the Yubileyny — a hotel complex operated by the presidential administration of the Republic of Belarus.

Now, they are starting to run out of money, Alena Chekhovich, the activist in Minsk, said in a telephone interview, with some forced to sleep on the street. Others relocated to hostels in the city center, even with expired visas — another sign, Ms. Chekhovich claimed, that the Belarusian government, which typically watches closely for migration violations, was exacerbating the crisis.

Ms. Chekhovich said many migrants who make it from Minsk to the border are basically marooned in makeshift camps there, monitored by Belarusian border guards who prevent them from returning.

"It's sad that people are ending up in this situation simply because of the actions of the state," she said.

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HEADLINE	11/12 Record number of workers quit jobs in Sep.
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/12/business/economy/jobs-labor-openings-quit.html
GIST	<p>Employers are still struggling to fill millions of open jobs — and to hold on to the workers they already have.</p> <p>More than 4.4 million workers quit their jobs voluntarily in September, the Labor Department said Friday. That was up from 4.3 million in August and was the most in the two decades the government has been keeping track. Nearly a million quit their jobs in the leisure and hospitality industry alone, reflecting the steep competition for workers there as businesses recover from last year's pandemic-induced shutdowns.</p> <p>There were 10.4 million job openings in the United States at the end of September. That is down a bit from the record 11.1 million posted in July, before the spread of the Delta variant of the coronavirus led to a slump in sales in some businesses. But demand for labor remains extraordinarily high by historical standards — before the pandemic, the record for job openings in a month was 7.6 million in November 2018. The Labor Department revised its estimate of job openings in August to 10.6 million.</p> <p>There were roughly 75 unemployed workers for every 100 job openings in September, the lowest ratio on record. Separate data released last week by the Labor Department showed that job growth rebounded in October but that the labor force barely grew.</p>

“You’re essentially seeing demand continuing to increase without an offsetting increase in talent,” said Ryan Sutton, a district director for Robert Half International, a staffing firm. “Until some new talent comes in, until we get employees who are on the sidelines back into the market, it’s very likely this is going to continue.”

Economists cite a [number of reasons for the slow return](#). The pandemic is still disrupting child care, making it hard for some parents to work; other workers are worried about contracting the virus or spreading it to high-risk family members. Many Americans have also built up their savings during the pandemic, allowing them to be choosier about jobs.

Those factors are likely to ease as the pandemic ebbs and savings dwindle. But other shifts could prove more lasting. In a research note published Friday, economists at Goldman Sachs observed that roughly two-thirds of the people who had left the labor force during the pandemic were over 55; many of them have retired and are unlikely to go back to work.

The labor crunch is giving workers the upper hand in negotiations. Wages have risen sharply in recent months, particularly in service jobs, although in other industries pay is [lagging behind the pace of inflation](#).

The recent rise in the number of workers quitting suggests that many are taking advantage of their leverage to accept better-paying jobs, or to look for them. At the same time, understaffing in many businesses may be putting stress on remaining workers, leading even more people to leave their jobs. Industries that require most employees to work in person, such as manufacturing, retail and health care — as well as leisure and hospitality — report the biggest increases in the rate of workers leaving their jobs.

“We are seeing big pickups in quits in the industries that are having the hardest time hiring right now,” said Nick Bunker, director of economic research for the job site Indeed.

Kaylie Sweeting worked as a bartender in Millburn, N.J., through most of the pandemic, despite concerns about interacting with unmasked customers and frustration about low wages. But when the restaurant pressured a colleague to come to work sick this summer, Ms. Sweeting quit.

“The job was absolutely no longer worth it,” she said. “I was hurt that a company that I gave my time to did not seem to prioritize me or my safety.”

So Ms. Sweeting, 23, and her partner, a cook, decided to take the money they had saved to buy a house and open their own vegan restaurant instead. They recently signed a lease and are beginning renovations, with plans to open early next year. They are trying to apply the lessons they have learned as employees, promising good wages, paid time off and other basic benefits that restaurant jobs have often failed to provide.

“I genuinely love the industry,” Ms. Sweeting said. “I just don’t love the way it’s managed. I feel like the only way to change it is to implement the change yourself.”

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HEADLINE	11/12 California broadens booster shots access
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/11/12/world/covid-vaccine-boosters-mandates#california-covid-boosters
GIST	<p>California is opening up eligibility for booster coronavirus vaccine shots to include anyone 18 or over, making it at least the second state to expand official eligibility beyond older adults and people in high-risk circumstances. Colorado took a similar step this week.</p> <p>California’s vaccination sites should not turn away anyone requesting a booster if they are 18 or older and were fully vaccinated sufficiently earlier, Dr. Tomás J. Aragón, the state’s public health director, said in a letter dated Nov. 9. Boosters can be administered six months after full vaccination with the Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna vaccines, and two months after Johnson & Johnson’s single shot.</p>

California's vaccination providers should "allow patients to self-determine their risk of exposure," he said, including whether their work, location or members of their households put them at higher risk of contracting the virus.

That allows greater leeway than the guidance from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the nation's public health agency, which [recommends boosters](#) for fully vaccinated adults with underlying medical conditions, those who are 65 and older, and those 18 and over whose work exposure puts them at risk.

However, in practice, boosters are widely available across the United States because many vaccination providers allow individuals to self-affirm their eligibility.

In a [news conference](#) on Wednesday, California officials noted that cases were on a troubling ascent in other parts of the country, and that vaccines were the best way to prevent a winter surge. They recalled last year's terrifying winter months, when California's hospitals were stretched to their limits and so many Covid patients died that officials were forced to deploy mobile morgues.

Dr. Mark Ghaly, the state's secretary of health and human services, said that federal guidelines recognized that there is increasing evidence of waning immunity months after people are fully vaccinated and that people outside the groups specified by the C.D.C. could also get booster shots if they are available.

"If you're interested in getting a booster, go ahead and get one," he said.

On Tuesday, [Pfizer and BioNTech requested](#) that the Food and Drug Administration expand booster eligibility to anyone 18 and older, but that decision has not yet been made. Only after the F.D.A. makes a determination would the C.D.C. consider altering its own guidance.

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HEADLINE	11/12 'Scandal'; booster shots outpace poor vax
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/11/12/world/covid-vaccine-boosters-mandates#a-scandal-who-says-the-rate-of-boosters-outstrips-some-poor-countries-vaccinations
GIST	<p>Six times more booster shots of coronavirus vaccine are being administered around the world daily than primary doses in low-income countries, the director general of the World Health Organization said on Friday, calling the disparity "a scandal that must stop now."</p> <p>The official, Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, and others at the W.H.O. have regularly criticized wealthy nations for hoarding vaccines while lower-income countries do not have enough doses to vaccinate their elderly, frontline health care workers and other high-risk groups. In August, Dr. Tedros called for a global moratorium on boosters that he later extended until the end of the year.</p> <p>However, nations including Germany, Israel, Canada and the United States have gone ahead with booster programs. The W.H.O. said in an email that 92 countries had confirmed programs to provide added doses and that none of them were low-income.</p> <p>About 28.5 million Covid vaccine doses are given daily around the world. According to the W.H.O., about a quarter of those are booster or additional doses. (Boosters are meant to bolster protection for those who were earlier fully vaccinated; additional doses are for immunocompromised people whose initial vaccinations failed to sufficiently protect them against the virus.)</p> <p>W.H.O. officials contrasted the at least 6.9 million added daily doses globally with 1.1 million primary doses being given in low-income countries.</p>

Only 4.5 percent of people in low-income countries have received at least one dose of a coronavirus vaccine, according to the [Our World in Data](#) project at the University of Oxford, a figure that is dwarfed by rates in wealthier countries.

The United States recently [authorized booster shots](#) for certain recipients of Pfizer-BioNTech's and Moderna's vaccines, and everyone who took Johnson & Johnson's vaccine. This week, [Colorado](#) and [California](#) announced that they would allow booster shots for all vaccinated adults.

Experts in the United States have been [divided over whether boosters are necessary](#) for most healthy Americans, and many say that the original course of vaccination continues to offer strong protection against serious illness and hospitalization. Other experts argue that [new data indicate that the boosters counteract waning protection](#).

Dr. Tedros also warned that access to vaccines was not enough to stop the virus, pointing to a [surge of infections and deaths in Europe](#) that has led the [Netherlands to plan a partial lockdown](#), the first recent lockdown in the region affecting both vaccinated and unvaccinated people.

"Covid-19 is surging in countries with lower vaccination rates in Eastern Europe, but also in countries with some of the world's highest vaccination rates in Western Europe," Dr. Tedros said. "It's another reminder, as we have said again and again, that vaccines do not replace the need for other precautions."

Every country should tailor its response to its situation, he said, but should also use measures like physical distancing and masking to help curb transmission and reduce pressure on health systems.

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HEADLINE	11/12 Court blocks federal vaccine mandate
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/12/us/politics/court-vaccine-mandate.html
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — A federal appeals court has kept its block in place against a federal mandate that all large employers require their workers to get vaccinated against the coronavirus or submit to weekly testing starting in January, declaring that the rule “grossly exceeds” the authority of the occupational safety agency that issued it.</p> <p>In a 22-page ruling issued on Friday, a three-judge panel on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit, in New Orleans, held that a group of challengers to the mandate issued by the Biden administration was likely to succeed in its claim that it was an unlawful overreach, and barred the government from moving forward with it.</p> <p>“From economic uncertainty to workplace strife, the mere specter of the mandate has contributed to untold economic upheaval in recent months,” Judge Kurt D. Engelhardt wrote.</p> <p>He added: “Of course, the principles at stake when it comes to the mandate are not reducible to dollars and cents. The public interest is also served by maintaining our constitutional structure and maintaining the liberty of individuals to make intensely personal decisions according to their own convictions — even, or perhaps particularly, when those decisions frustrate government officials.”</p> <p>He was joined by Judges Edith H. Jones and Kyle Duncan. All three are Republican appointees.</p> <p>In a filing asking the Fifth Circuit to withdraw its stay this week, the Justice Department argued that requiring large employers to force their workers to get vaccinated or submit to weekly testing was well within the authority granted by Congress to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, or OSHA. It also said blocking the mandate would have dire consequences.</p> <p>Keeping the mandate from coming into effect “would likely cost dozens or even hundreds of lives per day, in addition to large numbers of hospitalizations, other serious health effects and tremendous costs,” the Justice Department said in its filing. “That is a confluence of harms of the highest order.”</p>

The ruling by the panel of the Fifth Circuit is unlikely to be the final word. Some challenges to the mandate are in other circuits, and the cases will be consolidated before a randomly chosen one of those jurisdictions. The Supreme Court is expected to eventually decide the matter.

Dena Iverson, a Justice Department spokeswoman, said the Biden administration would defend the mandate through that process.

“Today’s decision is just the beginning of the process for review of this important OSHA standard,” she said in a statement. “The department will continue to vigorously defend the standard and looks forward to obtaining a definitive resolution following consolidation of all of the pending cases for further review.”

President Biden announced in September that his administration would issue the mandate as one of several steps to try to increase immunization rates and end the pandemic, which so far has killed about 750,000 Americans. Other mandates applied to federal employees and federal contractors.

In early November, OSHA, which is part of the Labor Department, issued the standard for companies with at least 100 employees. It would force them to require unvaccinated employees to wear masks indoors starting Dec. 5. Employees who remain unvaccinated by Jan. 4 would have to undergo weekly testing at work.

The proposed rule makes an exception for employees who do not come into close contact with other people at their jobs, such as those who work at home or exclusively outdoors.

A coalition of plaintiffs — including several employers and Republican-controlled states — immediately challenged the employer mandate in court. Their [lawsuit](#) argued that the mandate was an unlawful overreach that exceeded the authority Congress had legitimately delegated to OSHA.

Among other things, they argued that the agency has no power to regulate protections against exposure to disease, as opposed to workplace hazards like asbestos, and that framing the mandate as a workplace safety effort was just a pretext for the Biden administration’s real motivation: pressuring Americans who have been reluctant to get vaccinated.

Judge Englehardt’s ruling strongly sided with their point of view.

OSHA, he wrote, was created by Congress to ensure safe and healthful working conditions but was not “intended to authorize a workplace safety administration in the deep recesses of the federal bureaucracy to make sweeping pronouncements on matters of public health affecting every member of society in the profoundest of ways.”

The judge also derided the notion that the circumstances of the rule put forward by OSHA, under authority granted by Congress for “emergency” situations, qualified as an emergency.

“The mandate’s stated impetus — a purported ‘emergency’ that the entire globe has now endured for nearly two years, and which OSHA itself spent nearly two months responding to — is unavailing as well,” he wrote. “And its promulgation grossly exceeds OSHA’s statutory authority.”

Some large employers have already decided on their own to impose vaccine mandates on their workforces, including [3M](#), [Procter & Gamble](#), IBM, [Tyson Foods](#) and the airlines [American](#), [Alaska](#), [JetBlue](#) and United. Most workers have complied, though a small number have quit.

Former President Donald J. Trump appointed both Judge Englehardt and Judge Duncan in 2018. Judge Jones was appointed by former President Ronald Reagan in 1985.

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SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/health/king-county-judge-upholds-port-of-seattles-vaccine-mandate-against-lawsuit-from-unions/
GIST	<p>A King County Superior Court judge upheld a mandate issued by the Port of Seattle for all Port employees to be vaccinated by Nov. 15 as a condition of employment.</p> <p>Judge Samuel Chung denied the motion for a preliminary injunction against the mandate that was brought forth by two unions representing Port employees in a lawsuit last month.</p> <p>“The pandemic continues to be one of the unvaccinated,” said Steve Metruck, the Port’s executive director, in an email to Port employees on Friday. “... I want everyone to stay safe, healthy ... and remain here at the Port.”</p> <p>So far, 90% of Port employees have been fully vaccinated, according to a Port spokesperson. The other 10% have until 5 p.m. Monday to prove they are vaccinated. They can also submit an exemption request for medical or religious reasons, or request an extension demonstrating they have received at least one dose and intend to receive a second, the spokesperson said.</p> <p>Unvaccinated employees can take a leave of absence beginning Tuesday until they become fully vaccinated or receive a response to their exemption request. Those employees who do not receive an exemption and remain unvaccinated will be let go from the Port, the Port spokesperson said.</p> <p>The two unions that filed the lawsuit, International Brotherhood of Teamsters Local 117 and 763, represent approximately 225 employees, including police officers and bus drivers.</p> <p>“We are disappointed that the Port has put our members in a position of having to choose between maintaining their careers or doing something that violates their conscience or risks their health,” the two unions said in a joint statement.</p> <p>According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, unvaccinated people are more than six times more likely to test positive for the coronavirus, and more than 11 times more likely to die from the disease. An analysis earlier this summer showed that most deaths in the United States because of COVID-19 were among unvaccinated people.</p> <p>In October, a Thurston County Superior Court judge also denied a motion for a primary injunction brought by state troopers, corrections officers and ferry workers against Gov. Jay Inslee’s vaccine mandate for state workers. That lawsuit was not connected to the case against the Port of Seattle.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/12 Jury: toxic exposure Monroe schools \$62M
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/times-watchdog/2nd-multi-million-dollar-verdict-against-monroe-school-for-toxic-exposures/
GIST	<p>Students and parents who say they suffered brain injuries from exposure to toxic chemicals at a Monroe public school were awarded \$62 million by a jury on Wednesday in the second successful lawsuit involving noxious conditions at the school.</p> <p>More than 200 students, parents and teachers from Sky Valley Education Center, an alternative school southeast of Snohomish, allege in a series of lawsuits that they were poisoned by leaky light ballasts laden with polychlorinated biphenyls, or PCBs, a type of now-banned chemical that is linked to several illnesses.</p> <p>They’ve filed 22 lawsuits in all against Bayer Pharmaceuticals, which in 2018 acquired chemical giant Monsanto, once the sole manufacturer of PCBs, with the first two resulting in jury verdicts of \$247 million combined. The rest are awaiting trial.</p> <p>The plaintiffs say they developed neurological problems, skin lesions, cancer, hormonal diseases and other illnesses after months or years on campus.</p>

“So many students and teachers had to leave Sky Valley because they were just getting too sick,” said Michelle Leahy, a former teacher and a plaintiff in the first successful lawsuit involving Sky Valley. In July, a King County Superior Court jury awarded Leahy and two other teachers \$185 million in damages.

The plaintiffs in Wednesday’s verdict included four former students, two parents and an adult who spent time on campus for a community music program, said Rick Friedman, a Seattle attorney representing Sky Valley plaintiffs.

Bayer Pharmaceuticals said in a statement that it disagrees with the jury verdicts in both cases. It plans to file an appeal of the Wednesday verdict, as it did with the July verdict.

The \$247 million awarded so far includes compensatory and punitive damages. Washington state doesn’t typically allow punitive damages in this type of case, but plaintiffs’ lawyers successfully argued that laws in Missouri, where Monsanto was headquartered, applied to the case.

The company said students and parents weren’t exposed to unsafe levels of PCBs, and instead were exposed to “normal” levels found in U.S. populations. “We continue to believe that the undisputed evidence in this case does not support the conclusions that plaintiffs were exposed to unsafe levels of PCBs ... or that any exposure could have possibly caused their claimed injuries,” the statement reads.

PCBs were a fixture in electrical equipment until they were banned by federal officials in 1979. The chemical compound is among the most widely studied environmental toxin, with research linking PCB exposure and a number of diseases, according to the Environmental Protection Agency.

“The national tragedy is this stuff is still in an estimated 30% of schools,” Friedman said. He cited a 2016 report by U.S. Sen. Ed Markey of Massachusetts, which found that as many as 14 million students nationwide might be exposed to PCBs in old electrical equipment or building materials on campuses.

The Sky Valley campus, built in 1950, housed Monroe Middle School until 2011, when the Monroe School District consolidated middle schools and closed the campus. Later that year, district officials moved Sky Valley students to the campus, at 351 Short Columbia St.

Sky Valley Education Center is a parent-partnership program run by the Monroe School District that offers co-ops and group classes to home-schooled students. Many parents join their children on Sky Valley’s campus for classes, tutoring and other sessions.

Teachers at Sky Valley said fluorescent lights caught fire and dripped noxious oil onto classroom floors, exposing students to PCBs between 2011 and 2016, according to lawsuit complaints.

Leahy, 61, said she watched students and colleagues lose simple memory and cognitive functions. She was diagnosed with early-stage uterine cancer and developed temporary eyesight problems within a year of working at Sky Valley.

“I knew it was slowly killing me,” said Leahy, who worked for the school between 2000 and 2015. “But I loved that job so much. I loved those kids. It came to a point where I had to ask: ‘Do I stay and die?’ ”

Teachers and parents complained for years to school administrators and health officials about potential toxins on campus before the district took action, according to the lawsuit. Dozens reported symptoms of toxic exposure to a county health inspector in 2015 and 2016, court filings show.

A spokesperson for the Monroe School District did not respond to an interview request Thursday. A district spokesperson told The Seattle Times earlier this year, after the \$185 million verdict, that the Sky Valley campus has been deemed safe by health officials after they cleaned up contaminants.

	<p>In the second trial, the jury awarded students between \$5 million and \$8 million in compensatory damages, as well as \$5 million each in punitive damages. The adult plaintiffs received awards ranging from \$600,000 to \$1.5 million, as well as \$5 million each in punitive damages.</p> <p>Bayer attorneys played a role in grouping plaintiffs into separate lawsuits and deciding the order in which they'd go to trial, Friedman said.</p> <p>The plaintiffs were grouped based on shared experiences on campus or similar alleged health impacts. Trials are scheduled for some of the remaining plaintiffs in January, May and June, court records show.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/11 Covid hotspots: worrisome sign
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/coronavirus-pandemic-colorado-united-states-michigan-public-health-f2d9ccb4092fd4651d055dbf7083f259
GIST	<p>The contagious delta variant is driving up COVID-19 hospitalizations in the Mountain West and fueling disruptive outbreaks in the North, a worrisome sign of what could be ahead this winter in the U.S.</p> <p>While trends are improving in Florida, Texas and other Southern states that bore the worst of the summer surge, it's clear that delta isn't done with the United States. COVID-19 is moving north and west for the winter as people head indoors, close their windows and breathe stagnant air.</p> <p>"We're going to see a lot of outbreaks in unvaccinated people that will result in serious illness, and it will be tragic," said Dr. Donald Milton of the University of Maryland School of Public Health.</p> <p>In recent days, a Vermont college suspended social gatherings after a spike in cases tied to Halloween parties. Boston officials shut down an elementary school to control an outbreak. Hospitals in New Mexico and Colorado are overwhelmed.</p> <p>In Michigan, the three-county metro Detroit area is again becoming a hot spot for transmissions, with one hospital system reporting nearly 400 COVID-19 patients. Mask-wearing in Michigan has declined to about 25% of people, according to a combination of surveys tracked by an influential modeling group at the University of Washington.</p> <p>"Concern over COVID in general is pretty much gone, which is unfortunate," said Dr. Jennifer Morse, medical director at health departments in 20 central and northern Michigan counties. "I feel strange going into a store masked. I'm a minority. It's very different. It's just a really unusual atmosphere right now."</p> <p>New Mexico is running out of intensive care beds despite the state's above-average vaccination rate. Waning immunity may be playing a role. People who were vaccinated early and have not yet received booster shots may be driving up infection numbers, even if they still have some protection from the most dire consequences of the virus.</p> <p>"Delta and waning immunity — the combination of these two have set us back," said Ali Mokdad, a professor of health metrics sciences at the University of Washington. "This virus is going to stick with us for a long, long time."</p> <p>The delta variant dominates infections across the U.S., accounting for more than 99% of the samples analyzed.</p> <p>No state has achieved a high enough vaccination rate, even when combined with infection-induced immunity, to avoid the type of outbreaks happening now, Mokdad said.</p> <p>In a deviation from national recommendations, Colorado Gov. Jared Polis signed an executive order Thursday that allows any resident 18 or older access to a COVID-19 booster shot, another step to prevent hospitals and health care workers from being overwhelmed by the state's surge in delta infections.</p>

Progress on vaccination continues, yet nearly 60 million Americans age 12 and older remain unvaccinated. That's an improvement since July, when 100 million were unvaccinated, said White House COVID-19 coordinator Jeff Zients.

First shots are averaging about 300,000 per day, and the effort to vaccinate children ages 5 to 11 is off to a strong start, Zients said at a briefing Wednesday.

Virginia Tech's Linsey Marr, a leading researcher on the airborne spread of the coronavirus, predicted the northward spread of the virus in a Twitter post Sept. 15. The virus spreads in the air and can build up in enclosed rooms with poor ventilation. Colder weather means more people are indoors breathing the same air, Marr said.

Imagine that everyone you spend time with is a smoker and you want to breathe as little of their smoke as possible, she said.

"The closer you are to a smoker the more exposure you have to that smoke," Marr said. "And if you're in a poorly ventilated room, the smoke builds up over time."

Marr said she and her vaccinated family will use rapid tests before gathering for Christmas to check for infection.

"It's hard to know what's coming next with this virus," Marr said. "We thought we knew, but delta really surprised us. We thought the vaccine would help end this, but things are still dragging on. It's hard to know what's going to happen next."

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HEADLINE	11/11 Houston festival tragedy: 9 th person dies
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/9th-person-dies-astroworld-festival-tragedy/story?id=81116214
GIST	<p>A ninth person is confirmed dead after the tragic crowd surge at the Travis Scott concert at the Astroworld festival in Houston last week.</p> <p>Bharti Shahani, 22, died after being hospitalized from injuries she sustained at the concert.</p> <p>"Bharti is love. You know what is love? Bharti is love," her mother Karishma Shahani said tearfully at a press conference. "What happened to my blessing? I want my baby back. I won't be able to live without her."</p> <p>Shahani, a student at Texas A&M University, was taken to Houston Methodist Hospital, where her family says she had been on a ventilator and had heart failure.</p> <p>She was one of many who were injured in the tragedy at the Astroworld festival, when concertgoers rushed toward the stage.</p> <p>Some concert attendees recalled being pushed into one another from all sides, pushed down to the floor and trampled or crushed by other concertgoers.</p> <p>Shahani's cousin Mohit Bellani and her sister Namrata Shahani also attended the concert and recalled the chaos.</p> <p>"Once one person fell, people started toppling like dominos. It was like a sinkhole. People were falling on top of each other," Bellani said, ABC station KTRK in Houston reported. "There were like layers of bodies on the ground, like two people thick. We were fighting to come up to the top and breathe to stay alive."</p> <p>Now, the family is demanding answers and justice for their daughter.</p>

	"Please make sure that she gets justice," Shahani's father said. "I don't want somebody else's daughter to go like this. I kept hearing the news and all that, but for the last six days, I've not slept."
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HEADLINE	11/11 Pentagon surprise: China rapid military rise
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2021/nov/11/not-messing-around-chinas-rapid-military-advances/
GIST	<p>Pentagon officials are keenly aware of the dangers posed by China's cutting-edge weapons and its rapidly expanding military prowess across a host of domains.</p> <p>But perhaps of even greater concern are capabilities Beijing has kept partially hidden from the rest of the world, raising questions about whether the U.S. and its allies truly have a grasp on what tools the People's Liberation Army (PLA) has at its disposal.</p> <p>Top military officials told The Washington Times this month that no nation in history has consistently stayed ahead of U.S. estimates as well as China has done recently. Even the Soviet Union, during the height of the Cold War, did not surprise American intelligence and Pentagon analysts in quite the same way, military officials said, fueling fears that Beijing could catch the U.S. and its allies off guard in a future conflict.</p> <p>Over just the past several months, major revelations about the extent of China's hypersonic weapons capabilities, its nuclear arms stockpile and even the size of its navy have sparked concerns that Washington may not have a full window into exactly what its 21st-century rival has up its sleeve or what may be under development deep inside the communist nation.</p> <p>China also has poured tremendous amounts of money and manpower into its cyberwarfare programs, space capabilities and military drone initiatives, and it's not entirely clear whether U.S. projections on those fronts offer a complete picture.</p> <p>China's official military budget, at an estimated \$245 billion last year, is less than a third of the total U.S. military budget and just 1.7% of gross domestic product compared with 3.7% for the U.S. But the Pentagon faces a global military mission while the People's Liberation Army largely focuses on the Asian theater, and many doubt the official Chinese spending numbers capture the entire military budget.</p> <p>Specialists say it's vital to get as full an account as possible, as Beijing has tailored virtually all of its major military programs toward defeating the U.S. in a hypothetical battle for Taiwan or another major battle in the Pacific.</p> <p>Knowing what the American military may go up against is crucial, but getting answers is exceedingly difficult at best and virtually impossible at worst.</p> <p>China is in the midst of "a military modernization effort specifically focused on the ability to accomplish their political objectives with military force. ... One gets the sense that the People's Liberation Army is not messing around and they're moving out with a great sense of urgency," said Bradley Bowman, senior director of the Center on Military and Political Power at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, a leading Washington think tank. "They have methodically gone after leading technologies around the world and licitly and illicitly acquired those technologies to build this world-class military designed to defeat ours."</p> <p>While recent Pentagon assessments have offered an unprecedented level of detail about Chinese military capabilities, Mr. Bowman said it should come as no shock that Beijing is able to keep some of its programs under wraps.</p> <p>"We have a hard time figuring out what's going on in Afghanistan. Try penetrating China. ... This is a hard task," he said. "You put all of that together, and I'm not surprised that we're surprised."</p>

‘China is getting a lead’

Indeed, top Pentagon leaders conceded that the U.S. was caught somewhat off guard by China’s test this summer of a nuclear-capable hypersonic missile that circled the globe. Defense officials have long warned that Beijing’s hypersonics weapons program was at the cutting edge and in some ways ahead of America’s, but that specific test showed an unexpected capability that set off alarm bells in national security circles.

Just last week, a major Defense Department report on China revealed that the U.S. now expects China to have 1,000 deliverable nuclear warheads by 2030 — blowing past Defense Department projections offered as recently as last year. That report also found that China now boasts the world’s largest navy, at 355 ships and submarines.

Officials believe that trend will continue, with China consistently at the outer limits of U.S. military power projections.

“One of the most interesting things about being a China-watcher over maybe the last 10, 15 years has been it’s the only country certainly in my memory, and I’ve had people in the intelligence community tell me that they’ve never seen a country that consistently accelerates faster than we estimate,” said Lt. Gen. S. Clinton Hinote, the Air Force’s deputy chief of staff for strategy, integration and requirements.

“The Soviets didn’t do that. Certainly not North Korea or Iran, anything like that,” Gen. Hinote told The Times in an interview last week. “But China has done a good job of taking their economic power ... and applying that to acceleration of military capability. And this is why you’re seeing things like the hypersonic test” conducted by China last summer and recently confirmed by top Pentagon officials.

“I always expect China is going to be pushing the edge of that envelope increasingly forward,” he said, adding that the hypersonic test and the way in which it was conducted “did catch people by surprise” inside the Pentagon.

Some credit Chinese President Xi Jinping, who also heads the country’s Central Military Commission, for introducing improvements in both hardware and organization for the People’s Liberation Army since taking power in 2013.

“Xi’s arrival heralded an acceleration of modernization and solutions to problems that had confounded his predecessors,” Joel Wuthnow, a senior research fellow in the Center for the Study of Chinese Military Affairs at the National Defense University, wrote in analysis for the East Asia Forum Quarterly last year.

“While many had their origins under [predecessors Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao], a number of key systems came online in the Xi era, including the indigenous aircraft carrier Shandong, the Type-055 guided missile destroyer, the J-20 stealth fighter, the Y-20 long-range transport aircraft, the DF-21D anti-ship ballistic missile and the DF-17 ballistic missile fitted with a hypersonic glide vehicle.”

Mr. Xi also moved the military away from a top-down Soviet military model and cracked down on corruption in the senior ranks. The result: “a military better manned, organized and equipped to implement Chinese policy domestically and in the region,” Mr. Wuthnow concluded.

The Defense Department’s recent comprehensive report on the PLA raises other concerns about potential capabilities not fully understood by the West. In space, for example, the Pentagon found that China “is employing more sophisticated satellite operations and is probably testing dual-use technologies in space that could be applied to counter-space missions.”

The country also has become a global leader in drones and is developing a host of new intercontinental ballistic missiles, defense officials said, along with “biological activities with potential dual-use applications.”

	<p>Beijing is making strides in artificial intelligence and will likely incorporate AI into a host of military capabilities, the Pentagon said, including psychological and public opinion warfare waged against the U.S. via social media campaigns and through other avenues.</p> <p>“The PLA will likely continue to develop its digital influence capabilities by incorporating advancements in artificial intelligence to improve the quality and deniability of its messaging,” the Defense Department said in its China study.</p> <p>On Capitol Hill, lawmakers are increasingly concerned that U.S. officials and private analysts have failed to adequately grasp the scope of the dangers posed by the Chinese military, including the PLA’s construction of man-made islands in the Pacific that will make it far easier to launch military offensives.</p> <p>“When you see what [China is] doing, not only building these man-made islands that extend their kinematic range by 500 to 800 miles, but also by testing hypersonic weapons, building missiles that go Mach 25 with a range that touches the continental United States,” Rep. Mike Garcia, California Republican and Navy veteran, told Fox Business this week.</p> <p>“We are setting ourselves up for a perfect storm where the United States is probably more vulnerable against this giant bear called China than we ever have been,” he said. “China is getting a lead, and we need to take them seriously.”</p>
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HEADLINE	11/11 Houthi rebels breach US embassy site
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2021/11/11/us-embassy-yemen-houthi-rebels/
GIST	<p>Yemeni security employees of the U.S. government have been detained in Sanaa, where the compound that housed the American Embassy was breached by Iran-backed Houthi forces who took over of much of Yemen in 2014, according to the State Department.</p> <p>The U.S. diplomatic mission suspended operations in 2015, near the start of Yemen’s protracted bloody civil war between the Saudi-backed government and the Iran-supported Houthis. The American ambassador and key staff were relocated to Saudi Arabia, a major U.S. ally in the region.</p> <p>A spokesperson for the State Department said Thursday that a “majority” of the U.S. Embassy staff that were detained have been released and that Washington was engaging in “unceasing” diplomatic efforts to free the security guards still in custody. It is not clear why the Yemeni employees were detained, and State Department spokesman Ned Price said Tuesday that he was not able to say how many were detained.</p> <p>The State Department also called on Houthi forces to “immediately vacate” the embassy compound and to “return all seized property.” The detained Yemeni employees are security personnel who had been guarding the outside of the facility, according to a State Department official.</p> <p>Saudi Arabia is staunchly opposed to the Houthi forces and launched a military intervention in 2015, ostensibly seeking to restore Yemen’s internationally recognized government to power. The conflict is also a regional one, in which the Saudis and their allies are seeking to prevent Iran from expanding its influence.</p> <p>Houthi forces have also directly attacked Saudi Arabia, targeting the energy-rich kingdom’s airports and oil production facilities. The Saudi government had imposed a near-total blockade on Yemen, exacerbating a severe humanitarian crisis.</p> <p>The U.N. Security Council this week sanctioned three Houthi rebel leaders that it said helped orchestrate attacks on Saudi Arabia and Yemen’s remote Marib province, a stronghold of the internationally backed government. At least 1,700 government troops have been killed in Marib this year as of early October. The Houthis are also believed to have suffered serious casualties.</p>

In February, the Biden administration removed the Houthis from a foreign terrorist watch list and announced the end of U.S. support for the Saudi-led coalition's offensive operations, pledging instead to ramp up diplomatic efforts by naming a special envoy to Yemen.

The detentions and compound breach spurred criticism in conservative circles of President Biden's foreign policies. U.S. "enemies sense weakness when certain people hold office," Rep. Dan Crenshaw (R-Tex.) said in a tweet that compared the detentions in Sanaa to events such as the 1979 seizure of the U.S. Embassy in Tehran and the deadly 2012 attack on American facilities in Benghazi, Libya.

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HEADLINE	11/11 Tensions rise over booster shots
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2021/11/11/biden-administration-coronavirus-booster-shots/
GIST	<p>Anxious about a surge of coronavirus infections enveloping Europe as cases tick up in the United States, senior health officials in the Biden administration are pressing urgently to offer vaccine booster shots to all adults. But support for the renewed push is not unanimous.</p> <p>Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Director Rochelle Walensky has expressed caution about making extra shots so broadly available now, according to several officials familiar with the situation who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss internal deliberations. As a result, tension is rising among officials over how quickly to proceed and who should get the shots.</p> <p>The debate comes at a critical time for the Biden administration, with top advisers growing increasingly fearful the country could slide backward into a fifth pandemic wave amid colder weather and declining vaccine protection. Eager for the president to push his economic agenda, many aides see expanding booster access as a way to backstop progress against the highly transmissible delta variant. Allies also see defeating the pandemic as critical to Democrats' success in next year's midterm elections.</p> <p>The debate over booster eligibility centers on a request by Pfizer and its partner BioNTech to the Food and Drug Administration to authorize the shots for everyone 18 and older who has gone at least six months since completing their vaccine regimen. If the FDA grants the request, the CDC's outside vaccine advisers would probably need to weigh in before Walensky makes a final decision.</p> <p>In a meeting Sunday with high-ranking health officials, Walensky said that she and the advisers want to scrutinize the drug companies' data and might not agree to such a broad recommendation, said an official close to her who spoke on the condition of anonymity to describe a private meeting. It's extremely rare for the CDC to overrule the recommendations of its advisers.</p> <p>"She wants to see the data so she can formulate her decision," the person said, referring to Pfizer's most recent request to the FDA. "Someone took that as her reservation. That's not her reservation. She was pointing out that they might not go along. She knows no matter what, the decision is hers."</p> <p>Walensky's skittishness reflects the attitude of some CDC officials and advisers who are not convinced that young, healthy people need additional protection, especially since the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccines have been linked to a rare cardiac side effect in male teenagers and young men. They also note that focusing on boosters may distract front-line personnel from the more critical effort to defeat the pandemic, which is to get the first shots to unvaccinated people.</p> <p>Walensky declined to comment on internal deliberations about the boosters. "CDC officials will await FDA regulatory action before announcing next steps," CDC spokeswoman Kristen Nordlund said this week in response to questions.</p> <p>Most of the administration's senior health officials — including Anthony S. Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases; Surgeon General Vivek H. Murthy; and David Kessler, chief science officer of the White House coronavirus response team — are strong supporters of booster shots for</p>

all adults, according to people familiar with their views. Murthy did not respond to a request for comment and Kessler declined to comment.

Fauci said in an interview that he backs wider access to boosters “given that we are starting to see plateauing and even in certain states, an actual increase in cases.” He added: “I have always been and still am in favor of boosters. Exactly who gets the boosters is up to the FDA and up to the CDC.”

Many supporters of expanded eligibility and front-line health-care personnel think the current recommendations are confusing and discourage people from getting the shots, even if they might be eligible. CDC recommendations say that people are eligible if they are at least 65 years old, or at high risk because of medical conditions or exposure at work or in living situations.

They also point to mounting evidence that the vaccines’ protection wanes over time. And with breakthrough infections occurring nearly a year after the vaccines were first authorized, some officials are frustrated by Walensky’s hesitation, saying there is no time to lose to curb the virus’s spread.

“Europe is on fire,” said a senior health official. “And in the United States, the case counts are not going down. States in the Midwest are getting redder” with rising rates of covid-19, the illness caused by the virus.

The FDA, which is reviewing the companies’ data, plans to conduct a risk-benefit analysis before making a final decision on the request. The agency is strongly inclined to grant it, perhaps by the end of the month — though a disagreement with the CDC could complicate matters.

For example, if the agencies disagree on whether all adults should be eligible, they might hammer out a compromise that would clear the boosters for people 30 and older, under one scenario.

Paul Offit, a vaccine expert at Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia and a member of the FDA’s vaccine advisory panel, said the decision on whether young people should receive a booster hinges on whether the benefits to men ages 18 to 29 “clearly and definitively outweigh the risk” of [myocarditis, a rare inflammation of the heart muscle linked to the vaccines](#).

“All the evidence is that they are protected against serious illness” if they are fully vaccinated, he said, even if protection wanes against breakthrough infections. Offit [voted against boosters](#) for all adults in September, as part of the FDA advisory panel.

But a senior Biden administration official was critical of that viewpoint. “Those who are aware of the totality of evidence are confident that the benefits outweigh the risks in the overall adult population,” the official said.

Some state officials aren’t waiting for Washington to act. [California state officials](#), worried about a potential rise in cases, on Wednesday urged all adults who are six months past vaccination to get a booster. In Colorado, where a surge of covid-related hospitalizations is stressing the health-care system, state officials [unilaterally declared](#) this week that everyone 18 and older was eligible for a booster if they waited the specified time after initial vaccination, and they ordered pharmacists not to deny anyone.

A growing number of countries, including Canada and Germany, have authorized booster shots for all adults; Israel has cleared them for people 12 and older. But the debate in the United States has been heated from the start. In mid-August, senior administration health officials [announced](#) that they thought all adults would need boosters, in part because of Israeli data showing waning protection. They said they planned to make those extra doses available beginning the week of Sept. 20, assuming sign-off from the FDA and CDC.

But in September, outside vaccine advisers to those agencies balked at making the Pfizer-BioNTech booster available to all adults, saying there was insufficient evidence, and the agencies backed off. The FDA [authorized boosters](#) for the eligibility categories now being used. Shortly afterward, the CDC’s

immunization advisers voted against recommending the shot for people at risk of contracting the virus on the job.

Walensky, in a rare move, [overruled them](#) on that issue. Some administration officials say Walensky does not want to be put in that uncomfortable position again, should the outside experts reject a blanket booster recommendation for adults.

In non-pandemic times, it's not unusual for the CDC to make a more limited recommendation than the FDA. But in a public health emergency, it could be confusing to the public if the two agencies are not in sync, according to officials.

Some administration officials already are concerned that the public debate about the boosters over the past few months, especially the disagreements voiced by the agencies' advisers, has made it harder to convey the urgency of getting extra protection.

Their worries have intensified as new infections have ticked up to a seven-day average of 76,000 a day on Wednesday — the last day of full reporting because of Veterans Day — after hitting a low of about 69,000 new cases a day in late October. More than 1,200 lives a day continue to be lost to the virus.

This time around, the FDA has indicated that it does not plan to take the boosters-for-all issue to its outside advisory committee. The agency has discretion on when to consult the advisers.

Meanwhile, some officials at the CDC, which takes the lead in recommending how vaccines should be used, have suggested that other officials appear to be pressuring the agency to make a decision it views as premature.

Supporters of broad eligibility argue that authorizing boosters for all adults would simply be an explicit recognition of what is already occurring: Many people are getting access to the shots by saying they are in an eligible group since pharmacies are using the honor system. They say it's time to get rid of rules that lead people to pretend they are immunocompromised or work in a hospital.

Colorado Gov. Jared Polis (D) took matters into his own hands Wednesday, issuing an [executive order](#) declaring the entire state “high risk for exposure or transmission of covid-19 for the purpose of covid-19 booster shot eligibility.” The decision to expand eligibility was driven by soaring virus transmission and modeling that showed that giving boosters to more Coloradans could reduce pressure on dangerously full hospitals

Rachel Herlihy, Colorado's state epidemiologist, said that with the current rollout of boosters based on age and other risk factors, hospitalizations would peak on Jan. 1 with 2,258 people hospitalized. If, instead, three-quarters of people older than 18 receive boosters by the end of the year, the peak is projected to occur about two weeks earlier, with 2,082 people in the hospital.

“We can potentially at our peak avoid several hundred hospitalizations, and that ... could mean the difference for us here in Colorado between exceeding and not exceeding our hospital bed capacity,” Herlihy said.

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HEADLINE	11/11 Substitute teachers now in high demand
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/11/us/substitute-teachers-demand.html?action=click&module=Well&pgtype=Homepage&section=US%20News
GIST	<p>When Amber McCoy called in sick this fall, there was not a substitute teacher who could step into her fourth-grade class in Huntington, W.Va.</p> <p>Instead, her students at Kellogg Elementary School were taught by a rotating cast of seven staff members, including the assistant principal, who switched off every 45 minutes.</p>

“We are basically relying on every other warm body in our school,” Ms. McCoy said. Her current fear is that one day, several teachers will be out — with no one to fill in.

“We could shut the entire school down,” she said.

Across the country, some schools are doing exactly that. [Schools in Seattle will be closed on Friday](#) because they allowed too many staff members to take the day off following the Veterans Day holiday. A Michigan school district has already closed down [for several days](#) this month. And some Colorado public schools [have moved to remote learning this week](#), while others [canceled classes altogether](#).

The shortage has become so acute that substitute teachers, who have historically earned low pay, suddenly find themselves on the beneficial side of the supply-demand equation. In some cases, that has led to a rise in wages — and steady work.

But as the crunch continues, some schools are lowering their standards for substitute teachers, which were already lower than those for full-time faculty. The situation has become dire enough that within the last month, at least two states, Missouri and Oregon, temporarily removed their college degree requirements for would-be hires.

The moves have led to concerns by parents, educators and policymakers over the quality of instruction. It is already evident that a combination of school shutdowns and remote learning led to significant learning losses for students.

While Ms. McCoy is grateful for the school faculty that stepped in to teach her fourth graders, she also recognizes that most of them were not equipped to do her job.

“I think everyone that covered me really did their best,” she said. But “the art teacher isn’t going to deliver the same fourth-grade math instruction that I can.”

Substitute teachers are “a short-term Band-Aid that shortchanges students,” said Kim Anderson, executive director for the National Education Association, which represents millions of education workers across the country.

The problem starts with the need for more full-time teachers in many school districts. In Arizona, nearly 1,400 teachers left the profession within the first few months of the school year, [according to one study](#). In Florida, the school year began with nearly 5,000 teacher vacancies, [according to a video](#) posted by the Florida Education Association’s president, Andrew Spar.

Low pay, high stress and challenging working conditions have plagued the profession for years. But the fear over contracting the coronavirus has created “the perfect storm,” Ms. Anderson said, and teachers are now leaving, or retiring early.

“School districts are really relying on substitutes because there are many, many teachers who have left the field,” Ms. Anderson said.

Oregon once had 8,290 licensed substitute teachers, but by Sept. 18, that number had been cut in half. To create a bigger pool, the state, in an Oct. 1 [emergency order](#), created [a new license](#). These substitutes no longer need to pass several tests, or have a bachelor’s degree. They simply need to be at least 18 years old, sponsored by a participating district or charter school, and have “good moral character” with the “mental and physical health necessary” to teach.

In the two weeks after Oregon passed its measure, more than 180 people applied to work as a substitute in Portland public schools, the state’s largest district, according to Sharon Reese, the district’s chief human resources officer.

But, she said, “We’re not just accepting anybody who walks through the door.”

Missouri once required 60 college credits, the equivalent of an associate degree. Now, substitutes just need to complete a 20-hour online course on professionalism, diversity and classroom management.

“It sounds like what some of them are doing is substituting permanent teachers with substitutes,” Erica Groshen, an economist at the Cornell University School of Industrial and Labor Relations, said.

The problem, she said, is that substitutes cannot be expected to provide the same kind of education as a permanent teacher, who has developed lesson plans to meet certain expectations.

But some schools are desperate. Last summer, Leanna Cartier, 54, attended a job fair in Arlington, Texas, to look into becoming a substitute teacher.

Ms. Cartier, a semiretired accountant, had taken online training courses on classroom management and conduct, and was hoping for a few sporadic work days. But she was surprised to learn that, if she wished, she could work every single day.

In fact, in September, when she signed in for the first time to teach a junior-high history class, the school offered her a full-time substitute teaching position on the spot.

“I thought, ‘You don’t know me from Adam, and you’re inviting me to be a full-time sub!’” Ms. Cartier said.

In Miami, Joshua Hicks, 26, started substituting while in graduate school for sports administration. When the pandemic paused his plans, he started substituting more frequently. He now teaches a range of classes — from physical education to dance to history — at the Arthur & Polly Mays Conservatory of the Arts, a public school.

At one point, Mr. Hicks substituted for a month in two different classes, after each teacher got sick. Mr. Hicks said he believed that he and other substitute teachers are more than capable of teaching with authority.

“The only thing that separates us — and I’m not taking anything away from a full-time teacher — is the pay and that we do have the ability to say no,” Mr. Hicks said.

Deborah Mitchell, 58, substitutes for Wake County Schools, in Raleigh, N.C., and does not consider her training to be particularly extensive.

Ms. Mitchell attended a three-day seminar, where she and others were trained by doing mock-teaching and classroom management.

“They rely on us because so many teachers are just dropping out,” she said. “But with the amount of work that you need to do — you’re not just a teacher, you’re the social worker, the shoulder to cry on. It’s a lot more than just ‘teach me arithmetic.’”

She works about three to four days a week for about \$80 a day. It is less, she says, than what she would make working at Target, or as a babysitter.

And as schools continue to rely on substitutes to pick up the slack, some educators worry that this is what too many classrooms will become — some form of babysitting.

“My thinking is that they will find a way to keep the lights on,” Ms. Groshen, the economist, said. “But whether the actual education taking place is up to the standards that we need — that’s going to have an impact on this generation of children for a long time.”

HEADLINE	11/11 Germany's unsettling turnabout
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/11/world/europe/germany-covid-unvaccinated.html
GIST	<p>BERLIN — The University Hospital of Giessen, one of Germany's foremost clinics for pulmonary disease, is at capacity. The number of Covid-19 patients has tripled in recent weeks. Nearly half of them are on ventilators.</p> <p>And every single one is unvaccinated.</p> <p>"I ask every patient: Why didn't you get vaccinated?" said Dr. Susanne Herold, head of infectious diseases, after her daily round on the ward on Thursday. "It's a mix of people who distrust the vaccine, distrust the state and are often difficult to reach by public information campaigns."</p> <p>Patients like hers are the main drivers of a fourth wave of Covid-19 cases in Germany that has produced tens of thousands of new daily infections — more than the country has had at any point in the pandemic.</p> <p>For Germany it is a startling turnabout. At the onset of the pandemic, Germany had set an example for how to manage the virus and keep the death toll low. It was quick to put in place widespread testing and treatment, expand the number of intensive care beds and had a trusted leader in Chancellor Angela Merkel, a trained scientist, whose government's social distancing guidelines were widely observed.</p> <p>But today, a combination of factors has propelled a new surge, among them wintry temperatures, a slow rollout of booster vaccines, and an even more pronounced spike in infections in neighboring eastern European nations like the Czech Republic. The fact that Germany is in a kind of political limbo as it transitions between governments has not helped.</p> <p>But virologists and pandemic experts say there is little doubt that it is the unvaccinated who are contributing most to the wave of infections burdening in hospitals across the country.</p> <p>"It's our low rate of vaccination — we haven't done what was necessary," said Dr. Herold in Giessen. She was part of a team of scientists who modeled the impact of a fourth wave and warned in early summer that with the hyper contagious Delta variant at least 85 percent of the whole population would need to be vaccinated to avert a crisis in the health care system.</p> <p>"We are still below 70 percent," she said. "I don't know how we can win this race against time with the fourth wave. I fear we've already lost."</p> <p>Germany's vaccination rate is far better than that of many central and eastern European countries, where the death toll from coronavirus is soaring. In Romania, for example, only about four in 10 people have had two shots, and coronavirus deaths have hit record levels.</p> <p>Still, with about one in three Germans not yet fully vaccinated, the German vaccination rate is among the lowest in Western Europe. In Belgium, Denmark and Italy three in four people are fully vaccinated. In Spain and Iceland, only about two in 10 have yet to get the second shot. Portugal has a vaccination rate of close to 90 percent.</p> <p>The German rate lags because of pockets of vaccine resistance that are not limited to, but especially deep, in the former Communist east, where the far-right Alternative for Germany party is strong. Tino Chrupalla and Alice Weidel, leaders of the AfD's parliamentary group, are both proudly unvaccinated — and both tested positive for the virus in recent weeks.</p> <p>"What we are experiencing is above all a pandemic of the unvaccinated," the minister of health, Jens Spahn, said earlier this month.</p>

Infections have also spiked in parts of Bavaria and Baden-Württemberg, two wealthy southern states that are home to a noisy protest movement against measures to combat the virus, known as the “Querdenker,” or “contrarians.”

“We have two viruses in the country,” Markus Söder, the Bavarian governor, said in a television debate recently. “We have coronavirus and we have this poison, which is being spread on a massive scale,” he said referring to misinformation about vaccines.

Klaus-Peter Hanke knows about that poisonous propaganda firsthand.

He is the mayor of Pirna, a town of less than 40,000 in the eastern state of Saxony, which experienced a wave of violent protests from anti-vaxxers in the final days of the lockdown last spring.

One in three voters in the voting district that includes Pirna cast their ballots for the AfD in September’s national election. And just under half of inhabitants refuse to get vaccinated. They have helped to make Saxony the state with the lowest vaccination rate in Germany — and with the highest per capita number of new infections.

“The readiness to get vaccinated is low here,” Mr. Hanke said in an interview. “We tried to counter that with dialogue. But there is a point where you hit a wall, and you just can’t get any further and one result is that it has escalated.”

The Covid ward at the hospital is running out of beds. There, too, almost all patients are unvaccinated, Mr. Hanke said: “Nine out 10.”

And still, several restaurants in town have signs in the window, inviting “everyone” — not just those vaccinated or recovered from an infection as per state rules — to come inside.

There are now 10 control teams of three people each — a police officer a health official and someone from the department of public order — who roam the city’s restaurants, bars and hairdressers and fine those disregarding the rules on the spot: Owners have to pay 500 euros, about \$572, patrons 150 euros, \$170.

“It’s pretty drastic,” said Mr. Hanke, who has vaccine resisters in his own circle of friends. “But we see no other way to get people to change their behavior.”

Anecdotally at least, the tough approach might be paying off. Waiting times at mobile vaccination units increased to two hours this week, Mr. Hanke reported, suggesting that the threat of exclusion from much of indoor public life might be nudging more people to get a shot.

Several other German states are now working on similar regulations, introducing stricter mask mandates and instead of a negative test, making proof of vaccination or past infection mandatory for entry to many venues.

That may no longer be enough, said Sandra Ciesek, director of the Institute of Medical Virology at the University Hospital of Frankfurt and cosignatory of a paper by seven prominent scientists published last week, in which they urge politicians to speed up booster shots and consider a range of measures, including partial lockdowns for the unvaccinated or even a short-term national lockdown.

The absence of political leadership at the national level at a time when the number of new daily infections is soaring beyond 50,000 has added to the muddled approach to containing the virus.

Since her conservative party lost the national election in September, Ms. Merkel remains only as the head of a caretaker government while her likely successor, Olaf Scholz, has been absorbed by difficult coalition talks with two other parties.

“Where is Angela Merkel?” Der Spiegel asked in an article this week, before asking a few paragraphs lower: “Where is Scholz?”

	<p>It is a question many virologists across the country are asking, too, concerned that a lack of political leadership is wasting valuable time — and potentially costing lives.</p> <p>“There is no real center of power and responsibility: The country is missing leadership,” said Michael Meyer-Hermann, head of the department of Systems Immunology at the Helmholtz Centre for Infection Research and a member of the council of experts that has advised Ms. Merkel throughout the pandemic.</p> <p>“The outgoing government no longer really reacts, and the incoming government is playing everything down,” he added.</p> <p>After the number of daily new coronavirus infections hit a record high on Nov. 3, reaching 33,949, German virologists sounded the alarm. The response from Mr. Scholz’s future coalition partners was a statement promising that there would not be another lockdown.</p> <p>“For me it was a key moment,” Professor Meyer-Hermann said. “They act like the pandemic is over at a time when the numbers are exploding.”</p>
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HEADLINE	11/11 Volatile European border standoff
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/11/world/europe/migrants-poland-belarus-lukashenko.html
GIST	<p>WARSAW — Thousands of migrants, unwilling weapons in a geopolitical struggle, in peril in a freezing border zone. Far-right nationalists marching on the streets of Warsaw, calling for harsh action against asylum seekers. Belligerent national leaders facing off across a razor-wire border.</p> <p>A standoff over migrants along the European Union’s eastern flank, one that E.U. leaders say has been manufactured by the authoritarian government of Belarus, is growing more volatile, highlighting the raw emotions driving a crisis on that country’s border with Poland.</p> <p>So far the only casualties have been the migrants, stuck in the struggle between Belarus and countries on the frontline of the European Union, like Poland and Lithuania. Amid growing fears of a humanitarian disaster in the thick forests that straddle the border, a 14-year-old Kurdish boy from Iraq was reported by Polish news media to have frozen to death overnight on the Belarus side of the frontier.</p> <p>Eight others, according to the official count, died earlier from exposure.</p> <p>Aid workers, who are barred along with journalists and independent doctors from entering the border zone, believe the real death toll is higher and will rise sharply as winter sets in and pushes already freezing temperatures even lower.</p> <p>Western leaders have accused Aleksandr G. Lukashenko, Belarus’s autocratic leader, of engineering the crisis — creating a path into European Union countries for migrants from the Middle East. His aim, they say, is to punish Poland and Lithuania for harboring dissidents and other opponents of his government and to pressure the E.U. into lifting sanctions. Western members of the United Nations Security Council condemned Belarus’s actions on Thursday.</p> <p>In a statement posted Thursday on Facebook, Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki of Poland compared events on the border to those that cost Poland its statehood more than a century ago. While stressing that the situation now “is not so dramatic,” he said: “What we are dealing with is a new type of war. This is a war in which civilians and media messages are the ammunition.”</p> <p>Poland and Lithuania, both members of NATO as well as the European Union, have poured thousands of soldiers into the frontier zone to help border guards and police officers beat back what they describe as “hybrid war” by Mr. Lukashenko.</p>

Mr. Lukashenko for his part reeled off threats to his country's Western neighbors even as the Kremlin, his main benefactor, said it was working to resolve the situation and described the buildup of military force along the border as "a matter of utmost concern to all sober-thinking people in Europe."

In a sign of the escalating tensions, Poland's Defense Ministry on Thursday reported that its soldiers in the border area of Bialowieza had fired warning shots into the air the previous day after "a group of several hundred migrants attempted to cross the border by force." The migrants, the ministry said, threw objects at the soldiers and then tried to destroy a border fence.

The Polish Interior Ministry warned that, with security forces stretched thin by Independence Day rallies in Warsaw and other cities, Belarus might mobilize migrants to "storm" the border Thursday evening. By late evening, however, there were no reports of any such attack.

President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia spoke to Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany for the second day in a row about the crisis, the Kremlin said, but he repeated his desire that European officials speak directly to their Belarusian counterparts. That is a nonstarter for many in the West, who believe Mr. Lukashenko stole an election last year and consider his rule to be illegitimate.

Mr. Lukashenko told government officials in a televised meeting on Thursday that he had agreed that Russia would patrol the country's western borders with nuclear-capable bombers. He also said he could shut down the flow of a major pipeline carrying natural gas from Russia to Western Europe via Belarus if the West escalated sanctions. That, however, is highly unlikely as it would risk rupturing relations with Moscow, which owns the gas and whose support is vital to Mr. Lukashenko's political survival.

In Poland, the government's hard-line policy and its decision to forbid all nonresidents, including aid workers and European officials, from entering the border zone has played well with its right-wing base among Polish nationalists, who on Thursday [held an annual march](#) through the center of Warsaw to celebrate Independence Day.

The policy has also won support from fellow members of the European bloc, despite angry feuding between Warsaw and Brussels over the rule of law, L.G.B.T. rights and other issues. The nationalist ruling party, Law and Justice, has seized on the crisis with Belarus to trumpet Poland's role as guardian of Europe's eastern frontier and to counter claims that the country is undermining the union.

In a speech at the start of an Independence Day march featuring far-right activists in Warsaw, Robert Bakiewicz, the head of a nationalist group that organized the event, drew cheers and applause when he praised Polish soldiers, border guards and police officers who he said were defending the nation by keeping out the migrants.

"Poland is under attack," he said, "Today, it is the duty of every Polish patriot to support the state."

Extremist elements in the crowd, which also included young families pushing baby carriages, shouted demands that border guards shoot migrants instead of just pushing them back into Belarus when they cross into Poland.

The Warsaw police said several people had been detained but added that the march, in contrast to some previous years, had gone off without violence. A big reason for that was a decision by opponents of the Law and Justice party to cancel plans for a rival march in the same place. They gathered instead for a small rally in a different part of Warsaw.

Thousands of migrants, many of them Iraqi Kurds, have been escorted to the borders of Poland, Lithuania and Latvia under the watchful eyes of the Belarusian authorities, according to E.U. officials. And once there, they are stranded in bitter cold, prevented from entering the European Union or from going back into Belarus.

The Iraqi embassy in Moscow announced on Thursday that it will organize the evacuation of citizens stranded in Belarus who wish to return home, an offer that is unlikely to be taken up by many of those who risked their lives and spent thousands of dollars trying to escape the country.

Border crossings for cars and pedestrians have been closed but freight trains carrying Belarusian goods, including its main export, potash fertilizer, still cross into Europe, prompting demands from some that all traffic across the border be stopped.

“We are warning Europe, and yet they threaten to close the border,” Mr. Lukashenko said, according to the Belarusian state news agency. “What if we close off the natural gas headed there? I would recommend the leadership of Poland, the Lithuanians and other brainless people to think before they speak.”

With soldiers sealing off the border zone from news media and aid workers, the reported death of the 14-year-old Kurdish boy could not be confirmed. The boy’s body, according to a report by OKO.press, a Polish website, had been taken away overnight by Belarusian security services.

The crisis has threatened to entangle countries far beyond Eastern Europe, including Turkey and the United Arab Emirates, whose airlines have been accused of playing into Mr. Lukashenko’s hands by flying migrants to Minsk, the Belarusian capital. The European Union said earlier this week that it is considering blacklisting “third-country airlines active in human trafficking.”

Turkey’s Foreign Ministry on Thursday responded angrily to accusations that Turkish Airlines, by operating flights to Minsk, had aggravated the crisis. Turkey, the ministry said in a statement, had played no part in the crisis and, having hosted millions of refugees from Syria, “is one of the countries that best understands the test Poland, Lithuania and Latvia are left to face, and is in full support of its allies.”

Gathered in a sea of red and white Polish flags at a Warsaw roundabout named after Roman Dmowski, a pre-World War II nationalist leader reviled by critics as an anti-Semite, right-wing demonstrators started their march by lighting red flares and singing the national anthem. A small group of young men trampled a rainbow flag outside a nearby subway station, near stalls selling books denying the Holocaust and celebrating European fascist leaders like Francisco Franco.

But while the crowd included burly young men who raised their arms in Nazi-like salutes to chants of “Hail, Great Poland” and another group shouting “Border guards, open fire,” it also featured many peaceable people who said they simply wanted to mark the Polish equivalent of July 4.

“We are here to celebrate Polish independence,” said Monika Arbaszewska, a 38-year-old mother of two, who joined the rally with her businessman husband, Szymon. “We just want to teach patriotism to our kids.”

She said she felt sympathy for migrants fleeing war in places like Iraq but added that they should have stayed to rebuild their countries. During World War II, she said, “Warsaw was completely destroyed but we stayed to build our city and country.”

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HEADLINE	11/11 Seattle: more fires at homeless camps
SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/local/seattle-logs-more-fires-at-encampments
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — It has become a familiar sight at many homeless encampments in the city: An orange glow from a fireball erupting among the tents.</p> <p>On Wednesday evening, it occurred under the West Seattle Bridge and at an encampment located across the street from Chelan Café, where Jillian Meador is a regular customer.</p> <p>“And it seems to be spreading in Seattle,” she said. “That hits way too close to home.”</p>

Seattle firefighters a day earlier also extinguished a smaller blaze at Ballard Commons Park that burned down a tent and scorched nearby trees. The latest encampment fires now exceed 1,200 so far this year, a [new record](#) with just under two months before 2021 ends.

What will it take before Seattle acts?

"Probably someone dying," Meador said.

Kenny Stuart, president of the Seattle Firefighters' Union is calling on city leaders to act immediately.

"We need to end these encampments as soon as possible," he said. "So we don't go back again and again to the issues that should be mitigated by a major metropolitan city."

Stuart said his union members face all kinds of dangerous obstacles at the encampments that extend beyond the flames, including navigating around combustibles like propane tanks, drug needles, human feces, all while trying to avoid confrontations with the camp residents who harass the firefighters.

"Certainly our elected officials are in a position to draw the resources of our city," he said.

KOMO News on Thursday sought comment from Mayor Jenny Durkan and several Seattle City Council members, including Dan Strauss, who represents Ballard, and Lisa Herbold, whose district includes West Seattle.

Because of the Veterans Day holiday, neither one was immediately available to respond.

Along with the threats to firefighters, neighbors and business owners, there is also concern for the homeless residents at the camp who remain vulnerable.

A man named Perry who lives in a tent at Ballard Commons Park said a lot of campers start fires to stay warm, but in the event it gets out of hand, he says it continues to be a risk to other campers as well "Not just here, but over there," he said. "People who live over there."

In many cases, investigators say these are accidental fires and improper use of propane tanks is to blame.

At the very least, Medor is calling on city leaders to regulate or check up on how the tanks are being used.

"They shouldn't have access to propane tanks," she said. "You know it's kind of a no-brainer."

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HEADLINE	11/11 Groups urge federal probe police use force
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/aclu-naacp-urge-federal-probe-into-police-use-of-force-in-vancouver-washington/
GIST	<p>VANCOUVER, Wash. (AP) — Community groups are calling for the U.S. Department of Justice to open a civil rights investigation into the largest law enforcement agencies in southwest Washington over alleged excessive force and discriminatory policing.</p> <p>The move comes after the fatal shootings of eight people by Vancouver Police Department officers or Clark County Sheriff's Office deputies since February 2019, The Columbian reported.</p> <p>Three of the men killed were Black and two were Pacific Islanders. Others were in mental health crisis or suicidal, according to a letter the groups sent to the Justice Department.</p> <p>The fatal shootings by the two agencies over the two and a half years mark the highest rate of deadly force by law enforcement in Washington state, according to the American Civil Liberties Union of Washington and the NAACP in Vancouver.</p>

The ACLU and NAACP allege the two agencies treat people of color differently compared to members of far-right extremist groups active in the area.

“There is a dire need to ‘bring to light’ whether there is a persistent pattern of misconduct and remedy any systemic deficiencies,” their letter says.

Joining the ACLU and NAACP are people whose relatives have been killed by officers.

The letter said Vancouver police failed to respond in October 2020 when members of the far-right Patriot Prayer and the Proud Boys extremist groups drove trucks through a vigil where people had gathered in memory of Kevin Peterson Jr., a young Black man who was fatally shot by Clark County deputies.

“We come together to mourn, and we’re attacked by extremists. We come together to protest inequality and we’re attacked, and the police look the other way,” said Nickeia Hunter, whose brother Carlos Hunter was shot and killed by Vancouver police in 2019.

The organizations are asking the Justice Department to investigate under the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994.

“Federal intervention is necessary for all residents in Clark County to receive equal and fair treatment, constitutional policing, and to feel safe in their communities,” Enoka Herat, police practices and immigration counsel at the ACLU of Washington, said in a statement.

The Justice Department confirmed receipt of the letter.

“We will review the information provided,” Aryele N. Bradford, a department spokesman based in Washington, D.C., told The Oregonian/OregonLive reported.

Law enforcement agencies didn’t immediately respond to messages from The Associated Press seeking comment.

The federal government recently started broad investigations into the policies and conduct of police departments in Minneapolis and Louisville, where police killings of Black residents last year sparked nationwide protests, as well as in Phoenix, where federal officials said special attention would be paid to how police treated people experiencing homelessness.

Nearby, Portland’s Police Bureau has been under Justice Department oversight since the city signed a settlement in 2014 that calls for policy, training and other reforms after federal investigators found officers used excessive force against people with mental health issues.

The letter to the Justice Department cites eight fatal shootings by officers or deputies from February 2019 to October of this year. Excluding the most recent shooting in Vancouver on Oct. 17, a prosecuting attorney found the officers involved acted lawfully in each.

In its letter to the federal government, the civil rights groups also cited concerns about the Clark County criminal justice system’s treatment of people of color.

They referenced a Clark County judge’s derogatory remarks about Peterson, who was shot and killed by deputies in 2020 after he ran from an undercover drug bust with a gun.

Days later, Zimmerman apologized and soon after, he retired.

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SOURCE	https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-10191185/Downtown-Seattle-dangerous-city-employees-security-guard-escorts.html
GIST	<p>Seattle has become so dangerous that the city can no longer protect its own employees, with security guards now escorting them after they finish work.</p> <p>King County's new 'walking bus' will debut on November 15, and see council workers based in Downtown Seattle and nearby Pioneer Square escorted to a nearby train station and ferry terminal each evening before being left to continue their commute home.</p> <p>An announcement on King County's official website says: 'King County is launching a 'Walking Bus' pilot program where county employees can join their colleagues and a Facilities Management Division (FMD) Security Escort each evening walking to the King Street Station and the Coleman Dock from the downtown campus.'</p> <p>No provision has been made for private sector workers also based in the same area.</p> <p>The walking bus announcement also makes no mention of spiraling crime in the Pacific Northwest city, which has seen a recent 35 per cent spike in shootings this year compared to last, and a 76 per cent increase compared to 2019. So far in 2021, 73 people have been killed and another 283 have been injured by shootings in the city.</p> <p>But the danger the city fears its workers are in is further underlined at the bottom of the announcement.</p> <p>It states: 'The Walking Bus pilot program is in addition to security escorts offered by FMD Security Officers, who can escort you for several blocks from the building you work in, from downtown buildings to Goat Hill Garage or immediate vicinity bus stops.'</p> <p>It is unclear how the guards have been instructed to defend themselves and city workers in the event of an attack.</p> <p>King County security staff are issued pepper spray and bulletproof vests as standard, having had batons and handcuffs they were once permitted to carry removed several years ago.</p> <p>News of the walking bus hit the headlines a day after Seattle announced it was cutting \$10 million from the city police department's \$400m budget.</p> <p>That has outraged both pro-police advocates and defund the police campaigners, after the city vowed to hack 50 per cent off its policing budget in the immediate aftermath of George Floyd's murder.</p> <p>Meanwhile, the city's former top police officer Carmen Best - the first black woman to hold the job - said the push to defund cops is losing steam, even in the woke Washington city that was home to the infamous 'CHAZ' cop-free zone in summer 2020.</p> <p>Best resigned in September 2020 after the City Council slashed the department by 100 officers following pressure from Black Lives Matter protests.</p> <p>Since then, she said, most people have wanted to see a greater police presence throughout the city – especially after a summer of violent crime that saw shootings in Seattle spike by 35% since the previous year.</p> <p>Speaking with Fox News, she said, 'You don't hear it as much about defunding the police department. Because people want safety. It doesn't matter what race they are, they want to be able to call 911 and know if they're a victim of a crime that someone is going to show up and try to resolve it.'</p>

The Walking Bus program is one of the steps local officials have taken to approach the city's spike in crime, though Best said that moves to reduce police enforcement have far outweighed measures to boost public safety.

When she resigned from her post over a year ago, she said that the city council's budget cuts had left in a 'position destined to fail.' The city cut 100 positions at the time and the force has since lost 250 more, 100 of which were due to a Covid-19 vaccine mandate that forced employees to leave their jobs if they didn't have the jab by October 18.

The city also slashed her salary, which she told Fox News was 'attack on me personally because I was disagreeing with the policies that they were putting out about defunding the department; laying off officers so arbitrarily.'

She added, however, 'that's not the reason I ultimately left. It was that I just couldn't stay there in an organization where they were going to strip so many officers of their jobs.'

Best said that she values the important of recognizing issues in policing and learning from past 'transgressions' that spurred the Black Lives Matter movement, like the killing of George Floyd in May 2020. However, she said that taking officers off the streets is not the answer.

She said, 'Of course, you need to work out some of the issues and make sure they're a fair and just response for everybody, but people do want a police response. So I think now we're looking at how we can utilize other services to augment maybe some of the issues that are happening – but certainly not defunding the police department.'

She added, 'Of course we need our cops. But we can acknowledge the transgressions in the past and past history because acknowledging it is part of the step moving forward. We know that wrongs happened and now it's time to look at policies and procedures and practices to help us to make sure that we have fair and just practices for everybody and having more people who represent the communities that we're serving engaged and involved in policing.'

Shootings are up in Seattle by 35% this year to date – as opposed to 10% in Chicago, 18% in Atlanta and 22% in Los Angeles, according to Fox News.

In one of the most recent crimes to shake the city, a hair salon in Seattle was robbed at gunpoint by three men wearing masks from the horror film *Scream*.

Security footage, captured in the store in the Rainier Valley, showed the masked individuals entering the store at around 6.30pm on October 17. Janny Lam, the daughter of the store's owner, said that money, car keys and wallets were all stolen in the raid - but that nobody was injured.

Seattle Mayor Jenny Durkan, who did not seek reelection and is being replaced by moderate Mayor-elect Bruce Harrell, issued an executive order last month offering \$25,000 hiring bonuses for 911 dispatchers and police in an attempt to entice more recruits amid the loss of 350 officers.

But the union representing 1,300 police officers and sergeants said the move is too little, too late, particularly after Durkan sided with demands from activists and city lawmakers to defund the police.

The police union head accused Durkan of 'politically betraying' the police force by siding with those who called to defund the department after the death of George Floyd last year.

'The result of this betrayal has caused 350 police officers to flee Seattle since the riots,' Mike Solan said.

'Many of these former police employees left for lower paying agencies just to escape Seattle's toxic political climate. We also have another 100 officers now off the street due to the Mayor's COVID-19

vaccination mandate and another 130 officers currently unavailable for service who are out on extended leave,' Solan said in a statement.

'When totaled, that is just under half the department gone/unavailable in almost two years. Seattle's current police staffing crisis was caused by our current politicians and sadly it all could've been avoided. This political betrayal will forever be their legacy.'

Police officers were particularly incensed by Durkan's handling of the so-called 'CHOP/CHAZ' - the 'autonomous zone' set up by Black Lives Matter protesters after the ransacking of one of the Seattle Police Department's precincts downtown.

The mayor referred to the events of last year as a 'summer of love' - a comment that did not sit well with police officers who felt under siege from the prevailing political climate. The autonomous zone was eventually cleared after a series of shootings in the area.

Durkan's 'civil emergency order' acknowledges 'emergent staffing shortages' affecting the Seattle Police Department.

The order states that the city is 'experiencing a year-to-date 35 percent increase' in shots fired incidents and a 76 percent jump in shots fired incidents compared to 2019.

There has also been a 29% increase in the number of non-fatal shootings this year compared to last year, according to the mayor.

According to the mayor, the SPD's current level of deployable police officers stands at 1,015 - down from 1,325 in 2019. She said the staffing shortages have caused response times to increase.

The staffing shortage is so acute that the SPD is sending detectives and non-patrol officers to respond to emergency calls.

The union president said he 'would like to suggest to our current and soon to be newly elected politicians that if you want to hire new and lateral police officers, we suggest you also take care of your current officers.'

'These officers worked during the pandemic, are feeling the impacts of dangerous staffing levels and are without a union contract.

'SPOG is looking forward to working with our new mayor and the current/new city council members to remedy our city's issues.

'Seattle deserves public safety, and is worth saving.'

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HEADLINE	11/11 NY BLM leader threatens 'riots, bloodshed'
SOURCE	https://nypost.com/2021/11/11/blm-leader-hawk-newsome-threatens-riots-after-sit-down-with-eric-adams/
GIST	<p>A Black Lives Matter leader vowed there'll be "riots," "fire" and "bloodshed" if Mayor-elect Eric Adams follows through with his promise to bring back plainclothes anti-crime cops to battle New York's surge in violent crimes.</p> <p>New York BLM co-founder Hawk Newsome debated the plan for a return to tougher policing with Adams during a contentious sit-down at Brooklyn Borough Hall Wednesday that was livestreamed on Instagram.</p> <p>Although Adams found common ground with the activists on plans to fight poverty in the black community, the former NYPD captain said he'll be reinstating a revamped version of the undercover anti-crime unit that was disbanded at the height of widespread police protests last year.</p>

“If they think they are going back to the old ways of policing then we’re going to take to the streets again,” New York BLM co-founder Hawk Newsome said outside Borough Hall after the meeting.

“There will be riots. There will be fire, and there will be bloodshed,” he threatened.

“To ignore that history and say you’re bringing it back means that he’s tone deaf,” Newsome told The Post over the phone about the task force whose officers were involved in the deaths of Amadou Diallo, Sean Bell and Eric Garner.

Adams, throughout his campaign, promised to bring back a “reinvented” version of [the Anti-Crime Unit](#) that was tasked with firearm busts, as well as a crackdown on violent crime and hard drugs.

The controversial unit was [dissolved in June 2020](#) by Police Commissioner Dermot Shea following a “disproportionate” number of high-profile incidents that involved the plainclothes cops.

Former officer [Daniel Pantaleo was assigned to the anti-crime unit](#) when he placed Eric Garner into a chokehold on Staten Island — with the man’s last words, “I can’t breathe” becoming a rallying cry for the BLM movement.

The BLM leader said he was troubled Adams “didn’t offer a comment on police reform ... he wouldn’t offer us anything concrete” during their sit-down.

Hawk Newsome called Mayor-elect Eric Adams “tone-deaf” for ignoring the history of rising police brutality, in part from the Anti-Crime Unit.J.C.Rice

“We will be at his front door, we will be at Gracie Mansion, we will be in the streets, if he allows these police to abuse us,” Newsome said.

“I am not threatening anyone. I am just saying that it’s a natural response to aggressive oppression, people will react.”

In a statement to The Post, Adams said there is “no reason we cannot have both safe streets and racial justice in our city.”

“If Black lives truly matter, then we must address violence in our communities while we address bias in policing. Yelling and not listening gets us nowhere.”

At one point during the meeting, the mayor-elect grew agitated with Chivona Newsome, Hawks’ sister, who said politicians “shuck, jive and use rap quotes,” but don’t enact meaningful changes for people of color.

“You need to be corrected,” Adams said, talking over her. “You need to be corrected based on what you’re saying. Don’t tell me, ‘I need to do this’ ... say, ‘We need to do this.’”

“I put my body on the line for my community. So I’m not here for folks to come and say ‘I’m going to hold you accountable.’ No it’s us,” Adams lectured.

The meeting marked the first time Newsome met with an incoming or sitting mayor, as he told The Post he refused overtures from Mayor Bill de Blasio’s administration, calling him a “buffoon.”

[The controversial BLM leader](#) took credit for Adams’ election, claiming his movement allowed him to “achieve power.”

“At least with Eric Adams, we have a clean slate,” Newsome said, adding he thinks he will work with the incoming mayor on “anti-violence programs and food programs.”

	<p>Adams told leaders that as the city's second black mayor, he was the person best equipped to bring meaningful socioeconomic and educational change to the community.</p> <p>"There's one thing that we do agree on, that we need to change conditions that people are living in, historical conditions. And the conditions have not changed," Adams said.</p> <p>"What I know for sure, is there is no one in this city that's going to deal with this issue as the mayor of this city better than I'm going to."</p>
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HEADLINE	11/11 High inflation economy: groceries, gas
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2021/11/11/politics/high-inflation-economy-groceries-gas/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)Though Thanksgiving is still two weeks away, Travis Moffatt and his fiancée, Britnie Walston, have already purchased three apple pies for their family dinner and socked them away in the freezer.</p> <p>The Baltimore couple wanted to make sure they could secure the dessert before grocery prices rise any more or the pies disappear from the supermarket. They are paying \$5 for almond milk and \$7 for cereal, each up \$2 in recent weeks, and are shelling out more for eggs, water, juices, broccoli, frozen dinners and other items.</p> <p>Moffatt, 32, is feeling the pinch of consumer price inflation, which has climbed 6.2% over the past 12 months, the biggest increase in more than 30 years. Unemployed since the start of the pandemic, he receives \$250 a month in food stamps.</p> <p>"That's going rapidly due to the rising cost of groceries," said Moffatt, who this week landed an offer for a contract job helping small businesses apply for federal loans.</p> <p>Americans nationwide are contending with surging inflation, particularly for gas, fuel oil, used and new vehicles, and food. Higher prices are eating into pay increases and annual cost-of-living adjustments for Social Security benefits and food stamps.</p> <p>Though employers have been hiking wages in hopes of filling their multitude of open positions, workers are actually worse off than before the coronavirus pandemic began.</p> <p>Inflation-adjusted compensation is down 0.6% since December 2019, said Jason Furman, nonresident senior fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics, citing the latest federal Employment Cost Index data.</p> <p>The rising prices are also sapping consumers' confidence. They expressed greater uncertainty about the year-ahead inflation rate than at any time in nearly 40 years, according to October's University of Michigan consumer sentiment survey. That concern helped offset the positive impact of higher income expectations and the receding pandemic.</p> <p>What's more, a decline in living standards due to rising inflation was spontaneously mentioned by 1 in 5 households, particularly older and poorer Americans, the survey found.</p> <p>"For now, people are unhappy and inflation is why," said Josh Bivens, director of research at the left-leaning Economic Policy Institute, who believes that price hikes will moderate next year.</p> <p>For those living on fixed incomes, the rise in prices is particularly hard to handle. Sharon Henderson, 69, has turned to YouTube to learn how to shop and cook more economically since she and her husband, Paul, rely on Social Security and a small pension. Their grocery bill has shot up to around \$300 a visit, instead of the roughly \$200 it was prior to the pandemic.</p>

Henderson, who lives in Milwaukie, Oregon, has started boiling beans and making her own burritos, instead of buying the frozen ones at the supermarket. She's cooking casseroles and purchasing fewer organic frozen meals at Safeway.

The daily trips the Hendersons took to their local coffee shop for a cup of joe, sandwich and a treat are down to three times a week. The price of the coffee has risen 60 cents in the last few months, she said.

The couple also had to slow the remodeling of their manufactured home after lumber prices skyrocketed from \$10 to \$97 for a sheet of plywood earlier this year. They've restarted the work since prices have fallen. A sheet now costs \$14.

"It's a lot of nickel and diming, but those nickels and dimes add up," said Henderson, who worked as a graphic designer until she lost her job last fall. "It's scary. We have a little bit of savings, and I'm worried that all that's going to be gone."

Higher prices for other building materials, along with supply shortages, are making it harder for Wally Izzard, a union roofer, to land jobs. The Columbia, Missouri, resident has worked only sporadically since the end of the summer.

At the same time, gas prices have shot up, so he's cut back on nonessential travel. He doesn't know the next time he'll make the 10-hour drive to see family in Colorado.

Izzard, 42, filled up his 2017 Hyundai Sonata this week and was surprised to see it cost \$40, even though he'd still had a quarter tank of gas.

"Normally if I put \$40 in, I'm going back in to get change or put it back on my card," he said. "I wasn't even on empty. It's crazy."

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HEADLINE	11/11 Hong Kong 'chanting protester' jailed 5yrs
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/captain-america-protester-gets-nearly-six-years-in-prison-for-hong-kong-mall-chants-11636625197?mod=hp_listb_pos5
GIST	<p>HONG KONG—A former food deliveryman who chanted protest slogans in this city's shopping malls after China imposed a national-security law was sentenced to five years and nine months in prison after being found guilty of promoting independence, a sentence that establishes tough penalties for public dissent.</p> <p>Ma Chun-man, a 30-year-old who often appeared at flash protests carrying a Captain America shield, is the second person to be sentenced under the city's national-security law, which took effect in June 2020. He is also the first to be sentenced solely for nonviolent acts. He was found guilty of inciting secession by a judge who was handpicked by Carrie Lam, the city's leader.</p> <p>Mr. Ma was one of a shrinking number of people who participated in infrequent pro-democracy protests last year after the Covid-19 pandemic shut down public life in the city and authorities clamped down on demonstrations. He often appeared alone, chanting slogans at shopping malls, imploring others to join him.</p> <p>The sentence underlines the harsh penalties that face people who express views that are now forbidden under the new security law. Amnesty International called the sentence outrageous and said: "The Hong Kong government must stop criminalizing mere acts of expression without any demonstrated connection to the use of force or imminent violence."</p> <p>Police arrested Mr. Ma multiple times between August and November last year, in part for shouting "Liberate Hong Kong, revolution of our times," a popular slogan during the protests that rocked the city in 2019. That has since been ruled illegal under the security law. Mr. Ma earned the nickname Captain America 2.0 among local media and protesters for sometimes appearing with a red, white and blue shield.</p>

During his trial, lawyers for Mr. Ma acknowledged that he chanted the protest slogans but said he was merely exercising his rights to free speech as guaranteed under both the security law and Hong Kong's constitution. He said he didn't intend to incite secession. His lawyers declined to comment on the sentence.

In a handwritten letter to the judge delivered before his sentencing, Mr. Ma said he felt no shame or remorse for his actions and said he continued to deny the charges against him.

Since the security law was imposed last year, authorities have arrested 145 people for alleged violations and charged 84 people and organizations as of Oct. 31, according to the U.S. Consulate in Hong Kong. Four people have been convicted.

The security law gave authorities in Hong Kong broad new powers to crack down on four categories of crime. In addition to secession and terrorism, the national-security law bars subversion and colluding with foreign forces. The most severe violations carry terms of up to life imprisonment.

In addition to chanting forbidden slogans at demonstrations, Mr. Ma gave interviews to media outlets advocating Hong Kong's independence, authorities said, including at times just after being released from police custody.

Court records documenting his actions gave a picture of a protester acting virtually alone. He urged others to join him at assemblies using accounts with [Facebook](#) and the social-media app Telegram, authorities said, sometimes joined by just one or two other people. Many of these demonstrations took place at shopping malls around the city, where Mr. Ma would call out slogans into the crowd, drawing a response from just two or three people, authorities said.

He faced a maximum of seven years in prison.

In the letter to the judge, Mr. Ma said his life before his actions last year was quiet and with little purpose. He described himself as an unimpressive person and had never thought of participating in the 2019 street protests.

He became inspired to act after watching a speech posted online by a prominent protest leader. He began attending gatherings with other protesters, where he learned that many members of the movement remained troubled by the events of 2019 and the subsequent crackdown.

"I finally understood that in terms of where I am living, in terms of this land, I have a deep responsibility," he wrote. "For the first time, I found a purpose to live." He signed the letter with both his name and the moniker "Captain America 2.0."

Since the law's imposition, dissent in Hong Kong has been stifled and numerous members of the city's political opposition have been arrested or jailed, while others have gone into exile. Street protests that swept the city in 2019, sometimes violently, have been stifled—in part by the new law and by Covid-19 pandemic orders that placed new restrictions on large gatherings. Hong Kong authorities said the security law has brought stability to the city.

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HEADLINE	11/11 China coal shortage impacts India, SKorea
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/chinas-coal-shortage-threatens-farmers-in-india-and-truckers-in-south-korea-11636635601?mod=hp_listb_pos2
GIST	A coal shortage that led to an energy crisis in China is rippling beyond its borders, threatening to disrupt supply chains and farming in countries that rely on its exports of a chemical used in fertilizer and diesel exhaust systems.

India and South Korea are experiencing shortages of urea, which is extracted from coal, since China placed new restrictions on exports. It is widely used in India as a fertilizer and in South Korea to produce urea solution, which is used to reduce diesel emissions in vehicles and factories.

South Korean cargo-truck drivers say they are working to find gas stations that still carry the solution, with some having to idle their vehicles and stop work due to shortages. Prices of urea solution have soared as much as 10 times on secondhand markets, though the government has placed a ban on hoarding.

Logistics-industry experts say the shortage hasn't had a significant impact on supply chains but that it could if the situation doesn't improve by next month.

"Prolonged shortages could spell a logistics crisis," said Jung Hong-seok, head of the policy support team at the Korea Integrated Logistics Association, which represents South Korean logistics companies including [Hanjin Transportation](#) Co. and [CJ Logistics](#) Corp. , as well as e-commerce firm [Coupang](#) Inc. He said cargo containers carrying imports could get stuck at ports, construction sites may come to a halt as cement production and deliveries slow down, and next-day shipping services could face challenges.

Satnam Singh, who farms wheat on 1.5 acres in the northern Indian state of Punjab, said rumors of shortages have prompted panicked farmers to buy urea and another fertilizer essential for winter-sown wheat, diammonium phosphate, at almost twice the original price. "Prices have gone through the roof. It's a big problem," Mr. Singh said.

In some places, farmers have been unable to buy fertilizer even after standing in long lines for days, said Vikram Singh, joint secretary of the All India Agricultural Workers Union, warning that the shortages could disrupt the growing season and lead to rising food prices.

India's government has said that there are sufficient supplies of fertilizer and warned that anyone caught hoarding and selling on the black market would be punished. A spokesman at the Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers said officials were reviewing the supply targets for November but that the availability was expected to exceed demand.

The shortages of urea began escalating last month, when the Chinese government set new customs rules requiring inspection certificates for exporting fertilizer ingredients, including urea, effectively halting exports. China has been struggling to maintain a stable supply of the substance amid a shortage of coal. At least [18 provinces curbed electricity use](#) in September to help ease the crunch, idling work at factories and shutting off traffic lights in some places.

China produces about 40% of the world's urea, though its exports account for a much smaller fraction of global demand, according to government data and analysts. Exports accounted for around 10% of China's urea production last year of about 56 million metric tons, with the rest used in domestic agriculture. India takes more than half of China's urea exports, and South Korea is the second-biggest buyer.

Urea spot prices hit a record 3,159 yuan, the equivalent of about \$494, a metric ton at the end of October, up from around \$313 at the start of the year, according to official data.

From January to September, around 97.6% of South Korea's urea imports came from China, according to the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Energy. South Korea's last urea-production factory shut down in 2011, facing rising competition from low-cost manufacturers abroad.

In 2015, South Korea required all diesel-engine vehicles—including trucks, buses and industrial machines—to be equipped with emission-control systems. Engines won't start unless the diesel exhaust fluid tank is full.

The reports of urea-solution shortages have led people in South Korea to leave boxes of the liquid in front of fire stations nationwide over fears that emergency vehicles won't be able to operate. While there are shortages for emergency vehicles at some private hospitals, fire stations are required to keep a three- to

four-month supply on hand, said Kim Moon-yong, a director at the equipment-management division of South Korea's National Fire Agency.

As concerns grow, South Korean President Moon Jae-in has called on his government to stabilize the supply by leveraging public-sector resources and diplomatic channels. The country airlifted around 27 metric tons of urea solution from Australia this week, according to the Ministry of Economy and Finance. Around 200 metric tons of automotive-grade urea will be shipped from Vietnam next week, while negotiations are under way to procure an additional 10,000 metric tons of urea from other nations, the ministry said.

Meanwhile, China's customs authorities are on track to approve shipments of some 18,700 metric tons of urea that were booked on a provisional contract by South Korean companies, Seoul's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said. The Defense Ministry is also preparing to release around half of the 445 metric tons of automotive urea solution in the military's possession to the private sector in the form of a loan.

The South Korean government said Wednesday that current domestic supply of urea solution combined with the scheduled batches of imports should be enough to avert supply problems for three months.

Lotte Fine Chemical Co. , which accounts for around half of South Korea's urea-solution production, said it has halted its production line for 10-liter urea-solution products and is producing only its bulk urea-solution products, which are supplied mainly to gas stations.

The Ulsan, South Korea-based company, which sources nearly all of its urea from China, said it had enough urea in stock to support production until the end of this month. The dozens of smaller local urea-solution makers are facing a similar situation.

"We're doing our best to secure new channels for urea imports, including Russia and countries in Southeast Asia," a Lotte Fine Chemical spokesman said.

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HEADLINE	11/11 Largest inflation gain in 3 decades
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/rising-inflation-challenges-biden-agenda-11636651866?mod=hp_lead_pos1
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON—The largest inflation gain in three decades is posing a new challenge for President Biden as he seeks to enact another pillar of his economic agenda while also easing Americans' concerns about rising consumer prices.</p> <p>The inflation has driven new Republican criticism of Democrats' \$2 trillion social-spending and climate plan, which the White calls Build Back Better. House Democrats are aiming to wrap up the bill next week and send it to the Senate.</p> <p>The Labor Department said Wednesday that the consumer-price index increased in October by 6.2% from a year ago, the fifth straight month of inflation above 5%, with prices jumping on goods from cars and gasoline to groceries and furniture.</p> <p>Mr. Biden on Wednesday said alleviating challenges related to inflation and supply-chain logjams remained a priority while disagreeing with critics of his agenda. He said that a recently passed bipartisan infrastructure bill would help ease transportation bottlenecks, and that the Build Back Better plan would reduce families' costs.</p> <p>Mr. Biden has sought to strike a balance between emphasizing the positive economic news of rising wages and falling unemployment while acknowledging that inflation is still hurting American households.</p> <p>"Consumer prices remain too high," Mr. Biden said Wednesday during a visit to the Port of Baltimore. "Everything from a gallon of gas to a loaf of bread costs more."</p>

The administration also has looked for other ways to stabilize the supply chain, outlining a new program this week under which ports struggling with supply-chain problems will be able to redirect money from other federally funded projects [to ease logjams](#). Citing one example, the administration said the plan would enable the Port of Savannah, Ga., to reallocate more than \$8 million of funding to create five, temporary, inland container yards to reduce dockside congestion.

Republicans have uniformly rejected the Democrats' spending plan and the taxes that accompany it, and they pointed to Wednesday's readings as evidence that new spending was unwise.

"This inflation is real, it is not transitory. It's big and it's because of the Biden Administration's terrible economic policies," tweeted Sen. Kevin Cramer (R., N.D.) on Thursday.

The social-spending and climate plan includes funding for expanded child care, free prekindergarten, an enhanced child tax credit and other items, along with provisions to bring down prescription-drug prices.

Centrist Democrat Sen. Joe Manchin of West Virginia [has raised concerns](#) about the size of the proposal, citing in part its possible impact on inflation after a \$1.9 trillion Covid-19 relief bill earlier this year [boosted household incomes](#). On Wednesday he reiterated his concerns about rising prices while rejecting the administration's past descriptions of higher inflation as transitory.

"By all accounts, the threat posed by record inflation to the American people is not 'transitory' and is instead getting worse," Mr. Manchin tweeted. "From the grocery store to the gas pump, Americans know the inflation tax is real and DC can no longer ignore the economic pain Americans feel every day."

Moody's Analytics has estimated that the roughly \$1 trillion infrastructure bill, which includes \$550 billion in new spending, together with the \$2 trillion social spending and climate bill, would add about 0.3 percentage points to inflation, on average, for the 2022 to 2024 period.

Republicans have looked to seize on inflation ahead of next year's midterm elections, with plans to target vulnerable incumbent Democrats by tying inflation to Mr. Biden's agenda.

"Voters will hold Democrats accountable for causing this inflation crisis with their overspending and inability to manage our nation's supply chain," said Mike Berg, a spokesman for the Republican Party's congressional campaign arm.

White House spokesman Andrew Bates cited the endorsement of the Build Back Better plan by 17 past winners of the Nobel prize for economics and criticized the 2017 tax cuts, pushed through by the Republicans, as giveaways for the rich. "That's a debate we more than welcome," he said.

The White House is hoping the passage of the infrastructure bill, which Mr. Biden plans to sign into law Monday, will help boost his declining approval ratings and has pointed to polls showing broad support for the administration's economic agenda.

A Monmouth University survey released Wednesday found 65% of Americans support the infrastructure bill and 62% back the Democrats' spending plan for other domestic priorities. The same poll showed 42% of Americans approve of Mr. Biden's job performance, while 50% disapprove.

Patrick Murray, director of the Monmouth University Poll said the results demonstrated the White House and Democrats on Capitol Hill "lack a cohesive and concrete message" about how their plans will help the American people.

"Biden's appeal as an everyman who will help the middle class and the economically disadvantaged has taken a hit on both fronts in the past few months," he said.

Persistent inflation is also complicating the Federal Reserve's strategy for unwinding easy-money policies the central bank imposed early in the pandemic and comes amid uncertainty over who will lead the central

bank next year. Mr. Biden hasn't said who will serve as Fed chair after Fed Chairman Jerome Powell's term expires in February.

Mr. Biden interviewed Mr. Powell and Fed governor Lael Brainard for the role last week. Both have taken a similar view this year about the likelihood that inflation pressures would wane on their own.

Former Treasury Secretary Larry Summers, who raised alarms earlier this year over the potentially inflationary impact of the Democrats' \$1.9 trillion Covid 19-aid bill, has criticized the administration's characterization of the price increases as transitory. But he told CNN he didn't believe the current infrastructure and spending bills would fuel inflation, noting the spending was stretched over 10 years and would be offset by tax increases.

"I don't think that's an inflation problem," said Mr. Summers, who served as a top economic adviser to former President Obama. "I think a lot of it is vitally needed investments in the future of the country."

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HEADLINE	11/11 Scientists: Cop26 action must match words
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/nov/11/starting-to-turn-the-corner-optimism-and-anxiety-among-scientists-at-cop26
GIST	<p>Scientists attending Cop26 have sent a clear warning to policymakers: get a move on, because every moment of delay, every extra fraction of a degree of global heating will have dire consequences.</p> <p>That message has been reinforced at Glasgow with reports, forums and discussions, but those involved in channelling the science to the world's leaders are frustrated that words are still not being matched by actions.</p> <p>Peter Stott, a climate scientist at the Met Office's Hadley Centre who has been attending Cops since 1998, said he was marginally more optimistic than he had been before the Glasgow summit. "I have mixed emotions. I feel relieved that things have started to move, but I am concerned about the speed," he said.</p> <p>"The scientific message we have talked about for 25 years is being acted on. That is a vindication. We might be starting to turn the corner. But I feel a strong sense of anxiety I haven't felt before. I want to see the policymakers get a move on. In the next two years we have got to cut emissions rapidly."</p> <p>He said the success or failure of this Cop would not be determined by speeches and targets but by geophysics. "We will know Glasgow had an effect by measuring the carbon dioxide concentrations in the atmosphere. That is what scientists are looking for. And now it is acknowledged internationally that these concentrations need to go down. In that sense, science has done its primary job."</p> <p>New studies continue to underline the risks. This week the Hadley Centre released a report showing that 1 billion people would be at risk of extreme heat exposure if global warming reached 2C.</p> <p>Katharine Hayhoe, the chief scientist for The Nature Conservancy, feels humanity is getting closer to a collective epiphany – an "oh shit" moment – when people finally realise climate impacts pose a far greater threat than the solutions, and decarbonisation can be ramped up to the necessary scale of a Manhattan Project or a moon race.</p> <p>"I don't think we have arrived there yet but it's building," she said. "I think leaders are listening to what is already happening in this world. Fifteen years ago you had to be up in the Arctic or in a low-lying island to experience climate change. Today, wherever we live we are seeing the impacts and governments are responding." The costs are also becoming more apparent. In the 1980s, US insurers had to pay out for a \$1bn disaster every three months. Now, Hayhoe says, it is every two and a half weeks.</p>

Samantha Burgess, the deputy director of the Copernicus Climate Service, said EU satellites were increasingly monitoring record fires, temperatures, and extreme rainfall events leading to floods. “We have overwhelming evidence that the costs of inaction are orders of magnitude greater than the cost of action.”

Compared with the start of the conference, Burgess said she was a little more hopeful about reaching the 1.5C target because the direction of travel was clearer. “I think the motivation of everyone I have interacted with is very high in the transition to a net zero future.” But she was cautious about putting too much faith in long-distance goals. “There is a big difference between the policies drafted and the policies implemented,” she said. “Currently we are not on course for 1.5C. We need to see more political ambition on the pledges to align with the urgent changes described by the scientific evidence.”

How much of a difference Cop will make is fiercely debated. Last week the International Energy Agency said the promises made in Glasgow could put the world on track to limit warming to 1.8C by the end of the century, if every country lived up to its long-term net zero commitments. This optimism was hosed down by a subsequent assessment by Climate Action Tracker, the world’s most respected climate analysis coalition, which showed how weak short-term goals were likely to push global heating to at least 2.4C.

In negotiations, the most vulnerable states are now battling with big emitters to try to hold on to the 1.5C target, which is the most ambitious goal of the Paris agreement. Glasgow will almost certainly fall short, so one of the biggest challenges remaining at Cop26 is to keep that possibility alive with as much progress as possible and a more aggressive ratchet mechanism in the future.

Stott feels 1.5C is difficult but worth fighting for. “It’s probably going to be almost impossible to stay below it completely. We may find a way where we briefly go above 1.5C and then come down again. But what is at stake is so enormous that even if we get close that would still be a massive prize.”

Ed Hawkins, of the National Centre for Atmospheric Science at the University of Reading, concurred on the need to fight for every fraction of a degree. “Every tonne of CO2 matters. Every bit of warming matters,” he said. “There is an understandable focus on 1.5C or 2C, but there is no cliff edge. It’s a slope we are sliding down. The quicker we get off, the less bad the consequences will be.”

Hawkins is the scientist behind the “climate warming stripes” that can be seen on walls, pavements, scarfs, ties and dresses in Glasgow. He is encouraged by last week’s announcements on reducing methane, coal and deforestation, but he wants policymakers to act more quickly. “Every tree chopped down and burned ends up in the atmosphere. Setting the target to end deforestation by 2030 leaves the door open for another decade of deforestation. It would be helpful if action could be brought forward.”

He said warming would only stop when the world reaches net zero carbon, but emissions were heading in the wrong direction. Since the first IPCC gathering in 1988, the concentration of CO2 in the atmosphere has increased from 352 to 410 parts per million, and continues to rise.

“Over the past 30 years, the physical science that explains the dangers of our interference with the climate system has become ever clearer. Yet our ability to tackle the problem seems to have stood still,” he said. “Climate needs to be part of everyday conversations. That will inspire small actions and motivate politicians to act when they see these actions are popular.”

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HEADLINE	11/11 New worry: wildlife passing Covid virus
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/nov/11/us-covid-wildlife-virus
GIST	<p>As America’s pandemic – for now – seems to be moving into a new phase with national rates in decline from the September peak and vaccines rolling out to children, a new worry has appeared on the horizon: wildlife passing on the virus.</p> <p>A new study shows that deer can catch the coronavirus from people and give it to other deer in overwhelming numbers, the first evidence of animals transmitting the virus in the wild. Similar spillover</p>

and transmission could be occurring in certain animal populations around the world, with troubling implications for eradicating the virus and potentially even for the emergence of new variants.

One-third of Iowa deer sampled over nine months had active infections, with a peak of 80% testing positive between November and January, according to a preprint [study](#) that has not yet been peer-reviewed or published.

It builds on [previous findings](#) that one-third of deer in other US states were exposed to the virus and developed antibodies, but it differs in showing high rates of active infections, which last for a much narrower window of time.

The virus very likely spilled over from humans to deer through several different interactions, and then it probably spread to other deer, according to the analysis.

Nearly everything about their study shocked the scientists. They knew deer could be infected with the coronavirus. But they were stunned by the numbers – four out of five deer tested positive at the highest peak – as well as high viral loads that were “truly gobsmacking”, Suresh Kuchipudi, clinical professor of virology at Penn State and coauthor of the study, told the Guardian. They were also surprised by the fairly clear links in the genetic analysis connecting human transmission to the animals and then the rapid transmission to other deer.

“If there is spillover into free-living deer, it will rip through like wildfire,” said Vivek Kapur, professor of microbiology at Penn State and coauthor of the study. This analysis was limited to Iowa, but the researchers believe widespread infection is just as likely among deer in other states.

Deer, which are abundant in North America and a popular target for hunters, are highly susceptible to SARS-CoV-2, and they may contract it by grazing on discarded food, drinking contaminated wastewater, or nosing through undergrowth where a person has spit or relieved themselves.

“If they come in contact with the virus from any means of source, they are going to be infected,” Kuchipudi said. “It is highly likely that the animal will pick up the infection even though face-to-face interaction never happened.”

These results have implications for other wildlife as well. It is possible certain other animals are also contracting and spreading the coronavirus around the world, which would make it difficult to eradicate the virus and to prevent mutations that could lead to new variants.

Around the world, SARS-CoV-2 has been [reported](#) in cats, dogs, ferrets, minks, lions, tigers, pumas and gorillas. Hyenas at the Denver zoo [recently tested positive](#), the first confirmed cases in those animals.

In August 2020, an outbreak at a mink farm in Utah led investigators to sample wild mink nearby – and they [found](#) antibodies and active infections in some of the wild animals.

In November 2020, Denmark killed 17 million mink after the virus jumped from people to farmed mink and back to people again – the only documented case of animals passing the coronavirus back to people. The virus mutated, but [none](#) of the changes were dangerous.

Even before the Covid-19 pandemic, coronaviruses were [well known](#) for infecting animals, and vaccinations against common coronaviruses were standard for pets in the US.

Another coronavirus, which now causes mild cold symptoms, may have driven the 1889 pandemic that claimed 1 million lives – and it probably spilled over from cattle. Notably, cattle have also [passed](#) coronaviruses to deer, prompting concerns that SARS-CoV-2 could similarly move between deer, cattle and people to possibly catastrophic effect.

A virus that can circulate among animals as well as people is much harder to eradicate.

"It's much harder to get rid of a virus if it has a reservoir," Stanley Perlman, professor of microbiology and immunology at the University of Iowa, said. As people build immunity to viruses, fatalities begin to drop, but the viruses don't go anywhere – the flu virus behind the 1918 pandemic still circulates today.

"It's always gonna be with us. What form it's in, I don't know – hopefully, it'll be an attenuated, weakened form," Perlman said.

This cross-species contagion can result in mutations – and it's hard to know whether these variations will be milder or more severe. "So far, there's just been no evidence" of spillback into humans from animals, Perlman said.

But "the more any virus circulates and moves around, the more opportunity it has to mutate," Ellen Carlin, assistant research professor at Georgetown University's Center for Global Health Science and Security, told the Guardian.

"Just because a virus mutates, that doesn't mean it's a problematic mutation for human or animal health. But it could be, so we need to watch for that," Carlin said. "Anything is possible at this point."

The emerging evidence on animal reservoirs increasingly points to the need for several long-term efforts to stem the virus's spread, Carlin said. Vaccines for humans, for instance, can only go so far in preventing cases when a virus is circulating among animals.

"We need to do a better job detecting these viruses in animals before they reach people, and we need to be doing a better job preventing spillover before it happens. And that requires addressing really tough challenges, like land use change and deforestation and climate change and urbanization," Carlin said. It also requires investing in health care and monitoring systems, experts say.

The study in deer is "a really hard reminder that we need to do a much better job funding wildlife research, not just for SARS-CoV-2 but for other infectious diseases," Carlin said. "We have scientists who are more than capable of going out there and figuring out what's going on with SARS-CoV-2, but there's no real system in place to do that on a national level."

More research would also reveal whether or how animals spread the virus across species, including to people.

If research like this hadn't been conducted, Kuchipudi said, the outbreaks among Iowa deer would have gone undetected. "There was a silent epidemic, if you will, happening in the deer," he said. "We would have never known unless we tested the samples."

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HEADLINE	11/11 UN: worldwide displaced tops 84M
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/number-displaced-people-worldwide-tops-84-million-81106068
GIST	<p>BERLIN -- The number of people around the world forced to abandon their homes likely increased to more than 84 million in the first half of this year, an increase fueled in particular by conflicts in Africa, the U.N. refugee agency said Thursday.</p> <p>The U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees said the number of displaced people — most of them within their own countries — was up from 82.4 million at the end of 2020.</p> <p>"The international community is failing to prevent violence, persecution and human rights violations, which continue to drive people from their homes," the agency's head, Filippo Grandi, said in a statement. "In addition, the effects of climate change are exacerbating existing vulnerabilities in many areas hosting the forcibly displaced."</p>

	<p>A UNHCR report found that the number of people classed as refugees under its mandate was more than 20.8 million halfway through the year — an increase of 172,000 from the end of last year. The number of asylum-seekers stood at 4.4 million, an increase of 237,000.</p> <p>“Although comparable figures for internal displacement are not yet available, based on the information at hand UNHCR estimates that global forced displacement likely exceeded 84 million by mid-2021,” it said. Some 1.1 million people returned to their areas or countries of origin in the year's first half.</p> <p>The agency said that over 4.3 million new internal displacements were recorded between January and June in 33 countries where it is monitoring the displacement situation.</p> <p>It said that was a sharp increase from a year earlier and that intensifying violence led to “significant” displacement in Congo, Ethiopia, Afghanistan, Mozambique, Myanmar, South Sudan and countries in west Africa's Sahel region.</p> <p>UNHCR said its figures came from governments and its own offices around the world and were supplemented by data from non-governmental organizations.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/11 Sudan general tightens grip on power
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/group-internet-disrupted-sudan-court-order-81109053
GIST	<p>KHARTOUM, Sudan -- Sudan's top general has reappointed himself as head of the army-run interim governing body, a sign that he's tightening his grip on the country two weeks after he led a coup against civilian leaders.</p> <p>There was no immediate reaction by pro-democracy groups to the move by Gen. Abdel-Fattah Burhan, which was announced by Sudan's state television.</p> <p>The development comes amid repeated promises from the military that they will hand over power to civilian authorities. Since the Oct. 25 coup, more than 100 government officials and political leaders have been detained, along with a large number of protesters and activists. At least 14 anti-coup protesters have been killed due to excessive force used by the country's security forces, according to Sudanese doctors and the United Nations.</p> <p>Sudan has been in the midst of a fragile transition since a 2019 pro-democracy uprising led to the removal of longtime autocrat Omar al-Bashir. The 11-member Sovereign Council was first formed in the summer of 2019, after the military signed a power-sharing deal with pro-democracy forces.</p> <p>A number of other members of the body have also sat on the previous council that Burhan headed before he dissolved it in last month's coup. Also reappointed to the body Thursday was the powerful paramilitary leader Mohammed Hamdan Dagalo, as vice-president. Burhan also reappointed as council members another three generals who had served in the previous council, according to the state TV.</p> <p>Eight civilians, including one from the previous council, were also appointed.</p> <p>The agreement under which the council was formed after Bashir's ouster stipulated that the council should include five civilians chosen by activists, five military representatives chosen by the armed forces and one civilian member to be chosen in agreement between civilians and the generals.</p> <p>The make-up of the new council falls short of the demands of key pro-democracy groups in the African county. The Forces for the Declaration of Freedom and Change, the main group that spearheaded the uprising that culminated in the overthrow of al-Bashir, has said that it will oppose the reappointment of Burhan to the top decision-making position.</p>

Before the coup, the Sovereign Council held ultimate power while the government of the now deposed Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok oversaw day-to-day matters. Since the coup, Hamdok has remained under house arrest in the capital, Khartoum, as Western powers and U.N. diplomats try to mediate a resolution to the crisis.

The coup in Sudan has been condemned by the United Nations, the United States and the European Union — all of which have urged the generals to restore a military-civilian transitional government. Mediation efforts are ongoing to resolve the crisis.

On Wednesday, U.N. spokesman Stephane Dujarric said that U.N. Special Representative for Sudan Volker Perthes met the previous day with Burhan.

In the talks, the special representative urged for “a return to the transitional partnership” and appealed on the military “to exercise restraint and to take de-escalation measures, including freeing all those people who have been detained and the prime minister who remains under house detention,” said Dujarric.

Dujarric also said the U.N. Secretary General António Guterres spoke with the ousted premier, Hamdok, earlier in the week.

Earlier on Thursday, an advocacy group said internet access remains largely disrupted in Sudan since last month’s military coup, despite a court order for providers to restore services.

According to a tweet by NetBlocks, the disruption is now in its eighteenth day and represents an “ongoing impediment” to democracy and human rights. A Sudanese court ruled on Wednesday, ordering the country’s three main telecommunications providers to restore internet access. However, authorities have not shown any sign yet of carrying out that order.

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HEADLINE	11/11 Amid turmoil US urges citizens leave Haiti
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/us-urges-citizens-leave-haiti-amid-deepening-turmoil-81110879
GIST	<p>PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti -- The U.S. government is urging U.S. citizens to leave Haiti because of the country’s deepening insecurity and a severe lack of fuel that has affected hospitals, schools and banks. Gas stations remained closed on Thursday.</p> <p>The rare warning from the U.S. State Department comes as Haiti’s government and police are struggling to control gangs that have blocked fuel distribution terminals for several weeks.</p> <p>“Widespread fuel shortages may limit essential services in an emergency, including access to banks, money transfers, urgent medical care, internet and telecommunications, and public and private transportation options,” the State Department warned on Wednesday. “The U.S. Embassy is unlikely to be able to assist U.S. citizens in Haiti with departure if commercial options become unavailable.”</p> <p>It’s unclear how many U.S. citizens currently live in Haiti. A State Department official told The Associated Press that it does not provide those statistics and U.S. citizens are not required to register their travel to a foreign country.</p> <p>The warning comes as U.S. and Haitian authorities are trying to secure the safe release of 17 members of a missionary group from Ohio-based Christian Aid Ministries who were kidnapped by the 400 Mawozo gang on Oct. 16. There are five children in the group of 16 U.S. citizens and one Canadian. Their Haitian driver also was abducted.</p> <p>“We request continued prayer for the kidnappers, that God would soften their hearts,” the organization said in a statement on Wednesday. “As you pray, remember the millions of Haitians who are suffering through a time of serious upheaval and unrest.”</p>

On Tuesday, top Haitian government officials acknowledged the widespread lack of fuel during a news conference and said they were working to resolve the situation, although they provided no details.

Defense Minister Enold Joseph said the government is investigating why 30 fuel tanks sent to Haiti's southern region went missing, adding that he has observed gasoline being sold on the black market.

In addition, Le Nouvelliste newspaper recently reported that truck drivers have been kidnapped and fuel trucks hijacked.

"Everything is upside down," said Pierre Alex, a 35-year-old who works at a factory that makes clothes hangers. He said his son isn't able to go to school but can't work at home either because there is no power and no internet. "I don't know what saints to call upon to come help me."

The fuel shortage also has threatened Haiti's water supply, which depends on generators, and hospitals in the capital of Port-au-Prince and beyond.

Marc Edson Augustin, director of St. Luke Hospital, said he can only care for 50 patients with COVID-19 despite having 120 beds set aside for them because the company that provides oxygen to the institution has been hit by the lack of fuel.

On Wednesday, Doctors Without Borders warned that the shortages have forced it to reduce medical care since last week, with staff treating only patients with life-threatening conditions. The aid group said that its hospital and emergency center will run out of fuel for generators in three weeks or less if new supplies don't arrive.

"As tensions and armed conflict escalate in Haiti's capital, shortages of fuel, public transportation and drinking water are putting medical facilities and patients at risk," the aid group said. "Nearly all public and private health facilities in Port-au-Prince have stopped or limited admissions to only acute cases or closed their doors due to similar problems."

The aid group said that one patient with respiratory distress was recently refused at four different medical centers because the lack of fuel forced them to halt admissions. A fifth facility took her in, officials said.

Doctors Without Borders also said that the lack of fuel is preventing staff from reaching the hospital because of the scarcity of public transportation. It's a problem seen elsewhere, with parents unable to send their children to school and some employees unable to go to work.

The situation also has led to a spike in food prices in a country of more than 11 million people where more than 60% of the population makes less than \$2 a day. Meanwhile, a gallon of gasoline, when available, currently costs \$15.

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HEADLINE	11/11 Uneasy crossroads: Covid before holidays
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2021/nov/11/us-faces-uneasy-crossroads-covid-19-holidays/
GIST	<p>The U.S. recovery from the crushing delta wave of the coronavirus is beginning to stall out, with case counts stuck around 70,000 per day for two weeks after a precipitous decline from the peak of the Sun Belt surge in September.</p> <p>A drop in hospitalizations, a key metric as people begin to "live with" the virus and vaccinated persons fend off breakthrough infections, also appears to be slowing around the 45,000 mark.</p> <p>The Mountain West is seeing some of the biggest surges, with states like Montana and Wyoming accounting for some of the highest rates of hospitalization per population.</p>

“We are definitely in a crisis in terms of people getting the care they need,” Dr. Angela Dunn, executive director at the Salt Lake County Health Department in Utah, told National Public Radio. “When a patient needs an ICU bed, it takes us two to three hours because they’re all full. Usually, it takes 10 minutes.”

While vaccination rates in those places tend to be lower than the national average, some highly vaccinated places like New Mexico, Colorado and parts of the Northeast have seen surges, muddying the picture.

“It’s inevitable that there’s going to be an acceleration in cases as it gets colder and people move indoors and the virus transmits more efficiently,” said Amesh Adalja, a senior scholar at the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security. “The issue is: Are enough high-risk people immune to severe disease by being vaccinated or having prior infection in a given region to keep hospitals from being stressed? There are pockets, even in highly vaccinated states, with gaps in immunity, which is likely what is going on in Colorado.”

The slowdown in progress puts the nation at an uneasy crossroads as winter sets in and Americans try to enjoy the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays after a bruising 20 months.

President Biden, who pledged to corral the virus, is fighting the pandemic on two fronts, using a mix of pleas and mandates to lift vaccination rates among holdouts and deploying a booster program to shore up waning immunity in people came forward months ago.

With 58% of the U.S. population vaccinated, scientists generally believe the winter spike will be rough at times but not as bad as the horrific spike last year when the vaccine campaign was in its infancy.

Dr. Panagis Galiatsatos, an assistant professor at Johns Hopkins School of Medicine in Baltimore, said the majority of cases he’s encountered are in vaccinated persons who come to his doctor’s office and are “doing well.”

“Very few in the ICU. It’s the vaccine status that has been the game-changer in ICU decline,” Dr. Galiatsatos said.

Mr. Biden started to declare victory over the virus in midsummer, holding a barbecue at the White House to hail an upswing in fortunes while warning that variants could pose a problem.

The delta variant walloped the U.S., filling hospitals across the South and slamming big states like Florida and Texas.

That wave appeared to exhaust itself by late September, but Scott Gottlieb, the former commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration, said Thursday the wave simply moved “to less populated states in mountains, plains and now to more populated states in Great Lakes region, New England.”

The delta wave may be closer to its end than its beginning, Dr. Gottlieb tweeted, “but it’s tragically not done with us yet.”

While the U.S. sees uneven results, Europe is heading into crisis mode.

The World Health Organization said COVID-19 deaths in Europe rose 10% during the first week of November. The continent accounted for over half of global deaths during the same period.

The problem is particularly acute in Eastern European countries like Russia, Ukraine and Romania, where vaccine skepticism is high.

Germany is seeing some of its highest caseloads of the pandemic — it has a 67% vaccination rate but uptake varies by region — and the Netherlands is reimposing mask mandates.

HEADLINE	11/11 Veteran population shrinking as US ages
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2021/11/11/like-so-many-other-things-veteran-population-is-shrinking-america-ages/
GIST	<p>The last known living veteran of the Civil War died in 1956. The last living American veteran of World War I died in 2011. A 2020 report from the Census Bureau estimated that, as of 2018, there were only about 485,000 American veterans of World War II still alive.</p> <p>The story of the veteran population in the United States is, like so many other things, a story of an increasingly aging population. It is also a story of how military service has shifted and how it might shift again.</p> <p>That Census Bureau report included an analysis of the size of the veteran population by decade. (The 2020 Census had not yet been completed, so data for 2018 were used.) It also looked forward, projecting a further decline in the number of veterans in the coming decades.</p> <p>That decline is sharp — but it is also occurring as the population overall is growing. There were about 29 million veterans in 1980, when the population of the United States was just under 230 million. In 2018, there were about 18 million veterans in a population nearly 100 million larger.</p> <p>In other words, the decline in the number of veterans is actually more subtle than the decline in the density of veterans in the American population. In 1980, about 13 percent of Americans had served in the military (down slightly from 1970). In 2018, the figure was just over 5 percent. By 2040, the Census Bureau's data suggest that it will be around 3 percent.</p> <p>(On the graph above, you can see three points at which the density of veterans in the population jumped: <i>...click on source link to view graph</i>) during the conscription efforts that accompanied World War I, World War II and the Vietnam War. Those conflicts spurred the government to draft people into the military, swelling the number of service members. In 1973, the draft ended. Conflicts since have been conducted with a military made up mostly of volunteers — and have not been at nearly the scale of the world wars or the struggle in Vietnam.</p> <p>Inexorably, the veterans who served as a result of those surges are growing older and dying. If we consider just the number of Americans who turned 18 the year each of those conflicts began (1917, 1941 and 1965), you can see how the density of the age group faded over time. In 1949, about 5.5 percent of the population fell into one of these three categories (though, of course, those who would turn 18 at the start of the Vietnam War did not yet know that fate awaited them). Now, well under 2 percent do.</p> <p>There are implications here beyond simply population density. In April, for example, Pew Research Center noted that the density of veterans in Congress is at a low stretching back to at least the early 1950s.</p> <p>Of course, the projections of a further decline into 2030 and 2040 depend on one shaky assumption: that there will be no wide-scale conflict necessitating a broad effort to conscript soldiers. In the 1930s, the density of veterans in the population was lower than it is now and declining — and then that changed.</p> <p>None of us celebrates the loss of our veterans as they age. But if the alternative to a decline in the veteran population is a global conflict in which hundreds of thousands of people are killed, those projected density declines seem like an acceptable trade-off.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/11 The unclaimed soldier: thousands die alone
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2021/11/11/unclaimed-soldier/
GIST	<p>DES MOINES — Everyone on the third floor of South View Manor was accounted for except James Dean Ryan in Room #301. A police officer, checking on a worrying smell, opened his door and found Ryan facedown on his living room floor, another Vietnam veteran who died alone.</p>

Ryan's son and other relatives were notified, but many wanted nothing to do with him, alive or dead. No one stepped forward to bury him after his death last November. So the 66-year-old with talents for disco dancing and repairing furniture became yet another of America's unclaimed dead.

There is no requirement for local governments — who are responsible for unclaimed bodies — to report them to any national authority, so there is no official count. But tens of thousands of lives in the United States end this way each year, according to a Washington Post investigation that included more than 100 interviews over six months with medical examiners and local officials from Maine to California.

A striking number — thousands every year — served in the military, especially during the Vietnam War, according to funeral directors who directly handle their bodies.

"Vietnam vets got the rawest deal of anyone," said Jim Mowrer, an Iraq War veteran who never met Ryan but volunteered to carry his urn at his Iowa funeral in June. "We have a lot of making up to do to Vietnam vets."

While those who served in uniform after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks are publicly thanked for their service, soldiers in the 1960s and 1970s were often jeered. Back then, the United States was fighting a long war against North Vietnam, a communist nation supported by the Soviet Union and China, that many felt was unwinnable. It caused massive civilian casualties in Southeast Asia and street protests around the United States.

"One of the most painful chapters in our history was Vietnam — most particularly, how we treated our troops," President Barack Obama told Vietnam veterans in 2012, on the 50th anniversary of the start of the war. "You were often blamed for a war you didn't start. . . . You came home and sometimes were denigrated, when you should have been celebrated. It was a national shame."

More than 8 million people served in uniform during Vietnam and those who are alive are typically in their 60s and 70s. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs estimates that 530 Vietnam veterans die every day.

The overwhelming number are buried by family and friends. But a growing army of strangers are volunteering to wave flags and say prayers for the thousands who have no one.

"They're estranged from their family. They die alone. They commit suicide," said Linda Smith of the Missing in America Project, which helps arrange funerals for unclaimed veterans. "They don't have anyone to mourn them — that's what we do. The number is huge. It's really sad."

Last year, 1,752 unclaimed veterans were buried in the 150 veterans' cemeteries run by the federal government, according to VA. An unknown number of others were buried in state-run cemeteries, like the Iowa Veterans Cemetery where Ryan was interred. Still more were buried in the thousands of private cemeteries all over the country.

A troubled return home

Ryan was 20 and recently married when he joined the Army in 1974. His father had served during the Korean War, his grandfather fought in World War II and Ryan felt it was his turn.

So the Iowa high school dropout with plans of opening a furniture-repair shop became an expert marksman with an M-16.

The transition was rough.

He rarely spoke about what happened after he enlisted, but according to his ex-wife Linda Janes, "It did a job on him."

He went to Fort Bragg, N.C., where his training included jumping out of planes and parachuting into mock Vietnamese villages built on the Army base. He was never sent to Southeast Asia, nor were most of those who served during Vietnam.

But Ryan was deeply disturbed by his training in survival behind enemy lines, according to relatives. At the time, there were widely publicized accounts of the torture endured by American prisoners of war, including John McCain, a Naval officer who became a U.S. senator from Arizona. Two friends of Ryan's were killed.

According to Ryan's military records, he was honorably discharged, but only after being granted unexplained "excess leave."

"He had a nervous breakdown," said Janes, Ryan's second wife, who married him two years after he left the Army.

One month after he returned home, his first wife, Pamela, divorced him. He seemed changed, according to those who knew him at the time, and could become violent and angry. A judge signed a decree giving Pamela custody of their 2-year-old daughter and Ryan "his shotgun, tools and toolbox."

A remarkable 38 percent of service members sent to Vietnam were divorced within six months of returning home, according to a study cited by VA.

Ryan let his military crew cut grow out until his thick brown hair reached his shoulders. He took jobs plastering walls and welding pipes and he met Janes, a local girl who loved how he danced to the Bee Gees, Abba and Diana Ross. "I always wanted a guy who was a good dancer — and he was a heck of a dancer."

She also saw his pain. In apparent flashbacks to his Army training exercises, she said, "at times, he cried to me about how they would drop him down and [he would] see kids strapped with dynamite."

She said when she or Ryan dealt with VA, which runs a massive system of hospitals and outpatient facilities, it was so frustrating, they often just gave up.

Lori Wetlaufer, Ryan's stepsister, said he told her at least twice over the years how upset he was at not being able to get an appointment with a VA doctor. The last time she ran into him was at a gas station a year before he died, looking gaunt, and buying beer and cigarettes.

Janes said the military knew Ryan had a mental breakdown, but "there was no follow-up." She is sure Ryan suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder. He left the Army in 1975 and PTSD was only officially recognized as a psychiatric disorder in 1980.

Now, there is a far greater public understanding of how witnessing terrifying events can trigger depression, anxiety and substance abuse. But Vietnam veterans did not have the same mental health services that are available now.

Janes said she and Ryan were on their own, commiserating with other veterans and their families. She recalled a friend whose husband, a Vietnam veteran, would jump out of bed in the middle of the night and hide in a corner.

Ryan could not stop drinking — whiskey, beer, just about anything. Some people who knew him called him "J.D." and others "Jim," but everyone agreed he could be an angry drunk.

Wetlaufer said Ryan had a sweet side but often turned abrasive and "pushed a lot of people away."

Jerry Dacre, a neighbor who lives in Ryan's apartment building, said not long ago Ryan was stabbed by a man he had let sleep in his apartment. His kind side helped that homeless man, and his angry side then

fought with him over money. "When he was sober, he was a good old boy. But when he drank, the demons came out," Dacre said.

Janes said Ryan was at times physically abusive and once pointed a gun at her. She said her son never had the father other kids in the neighborhood had. Janes said Ryan would often apologize and be on good behavior, only to slide back into anger, and go back to drinking liquor and smoking marijuana. After nine years of marriage, she divorced him in 1986.

"He went downhill after that," she said. "His life was so screwed up, and he just burned bridges all the way around."

The Vietnam Veterans of America and its 700 local chapters often help with funerals for the unclaimed. Increasingly, other nonprofit groups are stepping in to help, many of which use social media to invite the public to serve as proxy family.

"I think the root of this problem is PTSD. It causes enormous personal problems," said John Rowan, the national president of the VVA. "We see a lot of these folks who are single or divorced, and they are estranged from their families."

Rowan attended his first funeral for an unclaimed veteran in New York in 2008. That year, amid a national recession that made affording funerals harder for many, local officials began seeing a spike in bodies languishing in morgues. The numbers have continued to rise since.

Rowan said police found John A. White, a former U.S. Army sergeant who had been awarded a chest full of medals in Vietnam, dead in his hotel room near the Empire State Building. He had very little in his room except his dress uniform hanging in the closet.

"He had nobody in his life," said Rowan. "We gave him a final salute."

Other Vietnam veterans made sure White was buried in his uniform and formed an honor guard for the soldier awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross and Bronze Star Medal.

After Des Moines police discovered Ryan's body on Nov. 12, the medical examiner found records that he had been treated at a local VA hospital. They called Lanae Strovers at Hamilton's Funeral Home because they knew she had a special interest in burying veterans.

Strovers had lost a friend who suffered from PTSD. She called the VA hospital to warn them that he desperately needed help. His mental health appointments kept getting canceled, and she pleaded with them to let him see a doctor. Three weeks later, she said, he died of an intentional drug overdose.

As Strovers began searching for Ryan's relatives, she saw names of family members listed in his father's obituary. She messaged a stepbrother she found on Facebook. He didn't reply but forwarded the message to his sister, Lori.

She was a lot younger than Ryan and though her mother and his father married later in their lives, she never really spent time with him. Wetlaufer called Ryan's son, but he replied, "No, thank you." He wanted nothing to do with the man who had mistreated his mother and abandoned him.

His parents were dead, no other family members felt close to him and many were angry with him. Wetlaufer told Strovers that having the government bury him was probably the best solution. Aware that money is often a factor when a family declines to bury their relative, the funeral director explained that there were veterans' benefits available to reduce the costs, including a free space in the state military cemetery.

In the end, seven months after he died, he was buried with other unclaimed veterans in a military send-off.

The United States has prioritized veterans' burials since the Civil War, when the public was outraged at bodies left on battlefields and buried in unmarked graves. Some states prohibit a veteran from being buried in a public cemetery for the poor and abandoned.

The federal government spends half a billion dollars a year to bury veterans, from maintaining its cemeteries to the \$27 million for U.S. burial flags presented to families.

Mowrer, the Iraq vet, said he would like more focus on veterans while they are alive. The military excels at training young soldiers and burying dead ones, but Janes said, it "backs away from a lot of things in between."

It's the job of VA to provide health care and benefits. Its budget is nearly 10 times larger than the Justice Department, which includes the FBI.

Congress is considering the Biden administration's proposed \$270 billion budget for Veterans Affairs for next year, a significant increase to help fund more mental health services, including for substance abuse and suicide prevention.

Last week, President Biden announced new efforts to improve access to mental health care for veterans, noting that an average of 17 veterans a day die by suicide. "We have only one truly sacred obligation as Americans — to prepare and properly equip our women and men in uniform when we send them into harm's way, and to care for them and their families when they return," Biden said.

The VA's bureaucracy, more than its resources, has long been the target of veterans' complaints. Janes said the paperwork required was defeating; a missing ID number or lost document meant no benefit. Several funeral directors interviewed about unclaimed veterans say they stopped applying for federal burial benefits years ago because the process is too cumbersome.

States and counties also offer veteran burial benefits, a rare budget item with bipartisan support. Polk County, Iowa, which includes Des Moines, reimburses funeral homes up to \$2,000 to handle unclaimed veterans, compared to \$750 for unclaimed civilians.

Funerals typically cost more than \$7,500, and funeral homes like Strovers' often donate services for unclaimed veterans. So do a growing army of volunteers.

Every year, the Missing in America Project arranges for services, chaplains, music, flowers and handcrafted urns for hundreds of unclaimed veterans, up from 30 to 40 a year when it launched nationally in 2007.

'You are not forgotten'

On June 18, Ryan and several other unclaimed veterans who ranged in age from 52 to 92 were honored at Hamilton's Funeral Home, where volunteers prayed, recited poems and sang "America the Beautiful."

Then the urns were loaded into a black hearse that was accompanied to the cemetery by 60 motorcycles, five police cruisers and a mile-long procession of cars and trucks. As they arrived, children waved American flags.

"These are heartwarming, but also gut-wrenching," said Terry Mitchel. "There is a reason we wear dark glasses."

Mitchel rode the lead Harley-Davidson for the Patriot Guard Riders, a group formed in 2005 to protect veterans' families from extremists from the Westboro Baptist Church that were disrupting military funerals. Patriot Guard Riders also form funeral honor guards for veterans, including many unclaimed.

At the Iowa gravesite, four kilted bagpipers played mournful tunes and a country artist sang the national anthem. Two hundred people came to pay their respects to veterans that almost all of them had never met.

	<p>Two uniformed soldiers folded Ryan’s burial flag in a precise 13-step ritual.</p> <p>Strovers picked a volunteer to receive the flag, a state representative, when she got no reply from the family.</p> <p>Mowrer wore white gloves to carry Ryan’s cremains in an urn made of polished cherry wood. He placed it in a niche in Wall 7, where a plaque lists Ryan’s name and reads, “You are not forgotten.”</p> <p>Usually at unclaimed services, no one who knew the deceased shows up. But Wetlaufer and her husband did. Afterward, she praised the lovely service but said she did feel a pang of sadness when his name was called out as Ryan James instead of James Ryan. It was a reminder that strangers had arranged J.D.’s funeral.</p> <p>Janes thought about attending. She had heard about it from a friend who saw the public notice of the burial of unclaimed veterans on Facebook.</p> <p>“I feel bad that nobody wanted to get his body,” she said. But she can still feel the pain he caused her before she left him 35 years ago. “If I went, I knew I would cry. I decided that he wasn’t going to make me cry anymore.”</p>
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HEADLINE	11/11 China Communist Party rewrites history
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/11/11/world/china-xi-jinping-cpc#xi-jinping-china-third-term https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/11/11/world/china-xi-jinping-cpc#what-was-decided-at-the-plenum
GIST	<p>China’s Communist Party delivered Xi Jinping a breakthrough on Thursday that will help secure his political future — by rewriting history.</p> <p>Senior party officials in a closed-door meeting in Beijing approved a decision reassessing the party’s 100-year history and enshrining Mr. Xi in the party’s official firmament of era-defining leaders. The move, signaled in an official summary of the meeting, elevated Mr. Xi to a stature alongside Mao Zedong, the founder of the country’s Communist rule, and Deng Xiaoping, the chief architect of its economic takeoff.</p> <p>Under Mr. Xi’s leadership, China has “made historic achievements and undergone a historic transformation,” said an official summary, or communiqué, from the meeting, hailing what the party described as successes in the economy, foreign policy, fighting pollution and containing Covid. Under Mao, Deng and now Mr. Xi, the communiqué said, China had “achieved the tremendous transformation from standing up and growing prosperous to becoming strong.”</p> <p>This week’s meeting was the start of a momentous year in Chinese politics. Its announcements will play a big part in the leadership shake-up at a Communist Party congress that is likely to be held in 2022, when Mr. Xi, China’s most powerful leader in decades, appears on track to secure a third five-year term as the party’s general secretary. There is no rival leader or heir apparent in view.</p> <p>The decision to place Mr. Xi among the country’s historical giants will bolster his argument that he is the only leader capable of steering China toward superpower status through uncertain times. China navigated the Covid-19 pandemic relatively well, but it faces economic risks from debt-laden companies and local governments social pressures as its population gets older, and growing distrust from the United States and other Western countries.</p> <p>On Thursday, in a recorded video to the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum, Mr. Xi urged Asian nations to resist forming “small circles on geopolitical grounds,” a clear reference to efforts by President Biden to shore up alliances of democratically minded countries to counter China.</p>

“The Asia-Pacific region cannot and should not relapse into the antagonism and division of the Cold War era,” he said.

Mr. Xi has faced a succession of crises, but he has often been able to turn them into vindication for his hard-line ways. He responded to months of pro-democracy unrest in Hong Kong by imposing a harsh security law. He applied sweeping restrictions to limit the spread of Covid-19 in China. And Beijing claimed victory after Canadian authorities released Meng Wanzhou, a Chinese telecommunications executive, at the same time that China quietly released two Canadians it had arrested.

By claiming a third term as party leader, as he is expected to do next year, Mr. Xi would break the pattern of staying in power for only two terms. In 2018, Mr. Xi made a bold power play by eliminating a term limit on the presidency, opening the way for him to lead China indefinitely. That move overturned widespread expectations that the party had been settling into a 10-year cap on leaders’ time in power.

Glorifying Mr. Xi’s achievements could help fireproof Mr. Xi against any challenges to his record. The decision is sure to become the focus of an intense propaganda campaign, as well as indoctrination sessions for party officials.

The gathering of Chinese leaders in Beijing was officially focused on summing up the lessons of 100 years of Communist Party history. But the outcome of the meeting, distilled in an official communiqué, showed that they were focused on the future, in particular on extending the sway of Xi Jinping, China’s most powerful leader in decades.

The communiqué lavished praise on Mr. Xi’s policies since he took power in 2012, exalting his efforts to retool the economy, reduce pollution and poverty, and eradicate corruption. Under Mr. Xi, it stated, the Chinese leadership has shown “enormous political courage.”

“It has solved many tough problems that were long on the agenda but never resolved and accomplished many things that were wanted but never got done,” it said. “With this, it has prompted historic achievements and historic shifts in the cause of the party and the country.”

One sore spot for China’s leaders has been the criticism, especially from abroad, that its territorial claims and strident nationalist rhetoric have alienated other countries, especially the United States and its allies. But the party meeting gave no sign that Mr. Xi had any regrets.

“China has broken new ground in its diplomatic endeavors amid profound global changes and turned crises into opportunities,” the communiqué said. “These efforts have resulted in a marked increase in China’s international influence, appeal and power to shape.”

The party leaders also praised Mr. Xi’s policies in culture and political ideology. Since 2012, Mr. Xi has cracked down on liberal values and celebrity culture, while promoting a return to patriotic rectitude. “We have seen a sweeping and fundamental shift in the ideological domain,” the communiqué said.

The strong endorsement of Mr. Xi’s policies could become powerful political currency for him as he heads toward a party congress next year, when he is likely to gain another five-year term as the Communist Party leader. The Central Committee announced that the congress would take place in the second half of 2022, but offered no details.

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HEADLINE	11/11 Outside climate summit trash piles high
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/11/world/europe/glasgow-garbage-strike.html
GIST	GLASGOW — In Gaelic, “Glasgow” translates to “dear green place,” a nod to the parks, gardens and flourishing green spaces throughout the city. But according to Chris Mitchell, who was a garbage collector

there for more than two decades, the only thing flourishing in Glasgow these days is “a mountain of waste.”

As diplomats at the [U.N. climate summit in Glasgow](#) this week preach about the need to curb both greenhouse gas emissions and mass consumption to protect the planet, the reality of today’s throwaway society can be seen just a short way from the conference’s doorstep.

Outside the gleaming center of Scotland’s largest city, dumpsters and trash cans are overflowing. The city’s rat population has surged, with four garbage workers hospitalized because of attacks over the past five months. And litter is strewn across streets.

Mr. Mitchell, a senior official for the GMB Scotland trade union, which represents the city’s 1,000 garbage collectors among other workers, said they staged an eight-day strike that ended on Monday because they were tired of poor working conditions, lack of respect from management and low wages. It is a cry that has been echoed throughout Britain, the United States and other parts of the world, where essential workers who carried communities through the worst of the pandemic [are saying they will no longer stand for being overworked and underpaid](#).

“We kept people safe,” said Mr. Mitchell, 45, who started working as a garbage collector when he was 16. “We cared for the most vulnerable. We cared for the elderly.” He appreciated the nightly clap for key workers during the pandemic. But now that coronavirus cases have subsided from peak levels, he feels the government has “abandoned low paid workers who have saved this nation.”

In parts of the city, trash is now collected only once every three weeks, down from once every two weeks about a year ago. That means garbage collectors, many of whom make less than 20,000 British pounds (\$27,000) a year, have to carry heavier loads up and down steps.

On top of the less frequent collections, volumes of trash per household climbed over the past two years, a reflection of increased spending on takeout and online deliveries, according to Mr. Mitchell.

“The pandemic has created waste upon waste upon waste,” he said.

The city of about 635,000 has urged residents to [reduce their waste to help protect the environment](#), but garbage collectors like Jack McGowan, 26, say that reducing collections is not an effective way to achieve that.

“The bins are always like that,” he said on Wednesday, gesturing to several overflowing dumpsters behind a block of apartments in Scotstoun, an area west of the Glasgow city center. “We need better pay. Respect as well.”

Mr. McGowan said he lives with his mother because he cannot afford a mortgage on his salary of £19,000 a year.

He said he had already seen four rats jump out of trash cans that morning alone.

Glasgow promotes its recycling program and efforts to become more environmentally friendly. But Mr. McGowan said he saw examples every day of people putting nonrecyclable trash in recycling bins.

Garbage collectors said they were likely to strike again in the run-up to Christmas if they do not get pay rises. In a statement, the Glasgow City Council said that the leader of the council had already had extensive conversations with the union and that the “door remains open to all trade union colleagues.”

Fiona Ross, a council spokeswoman, said she could not go into further detail because talks were continuing.

Meanwhile, the delegates inside the COP26 summit in Glasgow say they are making some progress toward an agreement to avert catastrophic levels of climate change.

On Wednesday, the United States and China issued a joint statement in which they pledged to do more to cut emissions this decade and in which China committed for the first time to address emissions from methane. Separately, the United Nations climate agency released a draft of an accord that urged nations “to accelerate the phasing out” of greenhouse gas emissions.

But outside the climate talks, there is a mounting frustration over the disconnect between policymakers and those most affected by climate change. There have been daily protests organized by youth activists, who say that pledges by countries that they will commit to goals that are decades away is not enough.

“Nobody really wants to incur the cost of preventing climate change today,” said Sayantan Ghosal, an economics professor at the University of Glasgow’s business school. “They’re willing to do it tomorrow, but they’re not willing to do it today.”

There has also been a gap between world leaders and business executives on the one hand, who have talked this week about the urgent need for a transition to clean energy, and the working class people on the other who will be most affected by the rising costs associated with that transition.

Many of the lowest paid workers in society, including garbage collectors, are [more worried about increasing prices of food, rent and energy](#) than about increasing temperatures. They often do not have the flexibility to spend more on food and clothing that are more sustainable.

As the U.S. economy picks up again, after a lull during the pandemic, people are quitting their jobs in record numbers, according to data from the U.S. Department of Labor. [There are five million fewer people working than before the pandemic began](#), and employers have struggled to find enough health care workers, waiters, truck drivers and butchers.

This has given employees newfound leverage and power.

[The number of workers on strike in the United States increased in October to more than 25,000](#), versus an average of about 10,000 in the previous three months, according to data collected by the School of Industrial and Labor Relations at Cornell University.

The shortages have disrupted Britain, which has struggled to find workers to make up for the thousands of European workers who left in five years since Britain voted to leave the European Union.

Mr. Mitchell, the senior union official, said that 20 drivers had left the garbage collection team in recent weeks for other truck driving jobs that are offering better pay.

Peter Welsh, a union spokesman, said Scotland needed to invest in the workers who will help deliver a transition to a greener economy.

“There are huge, huge challenges that I don’t quite think mainstream politics have begun to grasp and understand,” he said.

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HEADLINE	11/11 Surge energy prices saps EU recovery
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/11/11/world/covid-vaccine-boosters-mandates?type=stylIn-live-updates&label=coronavirus%20updates&index=0#the-daily-how-the-pandemic-left-us-public-health-officials-under-siege
GIST	Europe is facing fresh threats to its pandemic recovery as energy prices surge at a “tumultuous pace” and bottlenecks in the supply chain dampen growth and slow production, the European Commission said Thursday.

In its [latest economic forecast](#), the commission said that sporadic pandemic-related lockdowns in some parts of Europe, together with emerging labor shortages, were adding to the disruptions, while inflation has hit a 10-year high.

Europe's economy rebounded this year from the pandemic faster than expected, and regained prepandemic levels of growth during the summer. Among the 28 countries in the European Union, economic output is now expected to grow by 5 percent this year, slightly better than a forecast made a few months ago — an unusually robust rebound after pandemic lockdowns shuttered the economy last year.

Growth will slow to a 4.3 percent pace next year and then decelerate to 2.5 percent in 2023, the commission said.

Europe spent hundreds of billions of euros to keep workers furloughed during national shutdowns, and such programs have helped millions of people stay in their jobs and avoid a surge in unemployment, the report said. About 1.5 million jobs were created between April and June of this year, and nearly as many workers exited job retention schemes.

As in the United States and Britain, however, labor shortages have been plaguing industries that were quick to reopen, especially restaurants and parts of the retail sector. At the same time, there are still large numbers of people who are jobless and people who are available to work but not actively looking, the report said.

While the economic rebound has been swift, the surge in inflation is likely to weigh on the finances of Europe's households and businesses. A jump in [natural gas prices](#) has led to higher electricity bills. Altogether, the price of goods, services, energy and food combined jumped 3.4 percent in September from a year earlier, and even without volatile food and energy prices, the inflation rate is the highest in a decade. Inflation is estimated to have climbed to 4.1 percent in October.

But prices have jumped because of post-pandemic reopenings, the commission noted, so such pressures are expected to be largely transitory and fade over the next year, the commission said.

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HEADLINE	11/11 Lawsuit: health care workers mandate
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/11/11/world/covid-vaccine-boosters-mandates?type=styleIn-live-updates&label=coronavirus%20updates&index=0#vaccine-mandate-state-lawsuit
GIST	<p>Ten states filed a lawsuit on Wednesday seeking to block the Biden administration's coronavirus vaccine mandate for health care workers, on the heels of a court decision that temporarily halted the broader U.S. requirement that workers of all large employers be vaccinated or undergo weekly testing.</p> <p>The new suit, filed in U.S. District Court in eastern Missouri, claims that the rule issued last week by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services “threatens with job loss millions of health care workers who risked their lives in the early days of the Covid-19 pandemic to care for strangers and friends in their communities.”</p> <p>The 10 states also argue that the rule “threatens to exacerbate an alarming shortage of health care workers, particularly in rural communities, that has already reached a boiling point.” They say any further losses will endanger patients, causing “devastating adverse effects on health care services.”</p> <p>But the broader point echoes a separate lawsuit brought by many of the same Republican-led states against the private-employer mandate for those with 100 workers or more, contending that the Occupational Safety and Health Administration does not have the authority to dictate such policy.</p> <p>In announcing the rule, the administration set a deadline of January for all 17 million health care workers to be fully vaccinated at health care facilities that receive government funding under Medicare or Medicaid.</p>

Employees of hospitals and nursing homes, along with other medical sites, would not have the option of testing in lieu of immunization.

Federal officials said they could not comment on pending litigation. In a statement, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services said that “there is no question that staff in any health care setting who remain unvaccinated pose both direct and indirect threats to patient safety and population health.”

Legal experts said the agency generally had the ability to establish rules governing the organizations that it pays to deliver care. “C.M.S. has very broad authority to regulate Medicare-certified providers,” said Katrina A. Pagonis, a lawyer specializing in regulatory issues for Hooper, Lundy & Bookman.

Erin J. McLaughlin, a health care lawyer for Buchanan, Ingersoll & Rooney, said the rule was “essentially a condition of participation” in federally funded programs. The administration invoked the Supremacy Clause in the Constitution to pre-empt state and local laws when issuing the rule.

President Biden’s call for mandates followed months of pandemic outbreaks as the Delta variant threatened regions of the country, some with low vaccination rates but also others with vulnerable populations like those in nursing homes that had just begun to recover from the devastating death toll of 2020.

As cases mounted earlier this year, several medical societies came out [in favor](#) of strict mandates for health care workers, arguing these employees have a special obligation to keep their patients and colleagues safe. And many large, multistate hospital systems and large nursing home companies began [requiring](#) staff vaccination, although others lobbied against blanket requirements.

Many nursing homes had large numbers of workers who [remained unvaccinated](#) even after Mr. Biden announced the plan to mandate immunizations. The administration said that about 40 percent of all hospitals already required vaccinations. About 73 percent of nursing home workers are now vaccinated, according to federal data.

In the new lawsuit, the 10 states — Alaska, Arkansas, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, New Hampshire, North Dakota, South Dakota and Wyoming — claim that the federal government has overreached its authority to dictate what happens in their states. “This case illustrates why the police power over compulsory vaccination has always been the province of — and still properly belongs to — the states,” they argue in the lawsuit.

Despite the push by some nursing homes and hospitals to weaken the requirement, the administration chose to insist on vaccination. “It’s critical to us to make sure we’re ensuring the safety of residents living in nursing homes and other individuals in health care settings,” said Chiquita Brooks-LaSure, the administrator for C.M.S., in an interview.

Vaccinated staff are less likely to get sick and spread Covid, she said.

Ms. Brooks-LaSure acknowledged the providers’ concerns over losing workers who refuse to be vaccinated but she said mandates often ease shortages because employees don’t become infected. “What we’re seeing on the ground is that they are not going to work because they are sick,” she said.

She also cited the experience in states that have issued requirements as evidence that vaccination rates will rise as a result of the government’s decision. Many large systems mandated the vaccine but found only [a small minority of employees](#) unwilling to be vaccinated.

While some nursing homes and hospitals have expressed disappointment over the new rules, there is little expectation that large numbers will lose their government funding. Medicare does have the authority to discontinue financing for providers that do not comply, but Ms. Brooks-LaSure emphasized that the agency’s approach will be to work with facilities. “Our focus is really on educating providers and getting people to be in compliance,” she said.

HEADLINE	11/11 Africa: diabetes on rise amid Covid threat
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/11/11/world/covid-vaccine-boosters-mandates?type=style-live-updates&label=coronavirus%20updates&index=0#in-africa-where-diabetes-is-on-the-rise-covid-poses-an-added-threat
GIST	<p>Covid-19 patients in Africa are significantly more likely to die if they have diabetes, the World Health Organization said on Thursday, a worrisome trend on a continent where diabetes rates are rising and where the condition remains undiagnosed in many.</p> <p>Over 10 percent of patients with diabetes died when they caught Covid-19, compared with 2.5 percent for Covid-19 patients overall, according to an evaluation of data from 13 African countries carried out by the W.H.O. The study focused on underlying conditions in Africans who tested positive for Covid-19, and also found a higher fatality rate in patients with H.I.V. and hypertension.</p> <p>In recent years, the prevalence of diabetes has grown rapidly in Africa — and 70 percent of people with the condition there are not aware that they have it, according to the W.H.O.</p> <p>“Fighting the diabetes epidemic in Africa is in many ways as critical as the battle against the current pandemic,” Dr. Matshidiso Moeti, the agency’s regional director for Africa, said in a statement on Thursday.</p> <p>“The Covid-19 pandemic will eventually subside, but Africa is projected in the coming years to experience the highest increase in diabetes globally,” she said. “We must act now to prevent new cases, vaccinate people who have this condition and, equally importantly, identify and support the millions of Africans unaware they are suffering from this silent killer.”</p> <p>Changes in lifestyle and eating habits, rapid urbanization and a growing and aging population are some of the factors that have increased the prevalence of diabetes on the continent. Most of the cases in Africa are Type 2 diabetes.</p> <p>The findings cited on Thursday echo those of studies done elsewhere in the world, which have shown that people with Type 2 diabetes are at higher risk of being hospitalized, admitted to intensive care and dying if they catch the coronavirus.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/11 Debate: waning vaccine effectiveness
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2021/11/11/science/vaccine-waning-immunity.html
GIST	<p>As tens of millions who are eligible in the United States consider signing up for a Covid-19 booster shot, a growing body of early global research shows that the vaccines authorized in the United States remain highly protective against the disease’s worst outcomes over time, with some exceptions among older people and those with weakened immune systems.</p> <p>But while the vaccines’ effectiveness against severe disease and hospitalization has mostly held steady, even through the summer surge of the highly transmissible Delta variant, a number of published studies show that their protection against infection, with or without symptoms, has fallen.</p> <p>Public health experts say this decline does not mean that the vaccines are not working.</p> <p>In fact, many studies show that the vaccines remain more than 50 percent effective at preventing infection, the level that all Covid vaccines had to meet or exceed to be authorized by the Food and Drug Administration back in 2020. But the significance of these declines in effectiveness — and whether they suggest all adults should be eligible for a booster shot — is still up for debate.</p>

A study in England examined the vaccines' effectiveness against the Delta variant over time. It found that the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine is about 90 percent effective at preventing symptomatic infection two weeks after the second dose but drops to 70 percent effective after five months.

The same study found that the Moderna vaccine's protection also drops over time.

A study in the U.S. and another in Canada looked at the vaccines' effectiveness at preventing any infection from Delta, symptomatic or not. Although they found different levels of decline, both studies found that the vaccines' protection dropped over time.

But both the English and Canadian studies found that even after several months, the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccines remain highly effective at preventing hospitalization.

Each of the three studies showed a different rate of decline in vaccine effectiveness, which can vary in studies depending on factors including location, the study's methods and any behavior differences between those who have been vaccinated and the unvaccinated. While [one of the above studies](#) has been published, the [other two](#) have not yet been peer reviewed. Still, experts say that the research generally shows consistent trends.

"The main objective of the Covid vaccine is to prevent severe disease and death, and they are still doing a good job at that," said Melissa Higdon, a faculty member at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, who leads a project to [compile research](#) on Covid vaccine performance.

But the decline in protection against infection will have an impact, she added.

"With true declines in vaccine effectiveness, we'll likely see more cases overall," said Ms. Higdon.

Data compiled by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [show similar trends](#) for the mRNA vaccines, and they also suggest that the single-dose Johnson & Johnson vaccine is [less effective](#) against severe outcomes and infection than Pfizer or Moderna.

These results have helped to shape current booster recommendations in the U.S.: Among Pfizer and Moderna recipients, those 65 and older are eligible six months after their second shots, as are adults at high risk. Any adult immunized with Johnson & Johnson may also elect to get a booster after two months. Pfizer and BioNTech [asked the F.D.A.](#) this week to authorize boosters for all adults. But experts [have been divided](#) over whether booster shots are necessary for those beyond the most vulnerable.

There has been more agreement among experts about the need to offer extra protection to adults over 65. The declines observed in vaccine effectiveness for this age group may have greater repercussions, since older people face a higher risk of hospitalization from Covid.

"For those over 65, getting a booster helps cover your bases to make sure you are extra-, extra-protected, because the consequences are higher," said Eli Rosenberg, the deputy director for science in the Office of Public Health at the New York State Department of Health, who has studied [Covid vaccine effectiveness](#).

Seniors are also most likely to be affected by waning vaccine immunity now, since they were among the first to be vaccinated in the U.S. About 71 percent of people aged 65 and older — about 36 million people — completed their initial vaccination series more than six months ago. So far, about 31 percent have received a booster shot.

An additional 69 million people in the U.S. under the age of 65, more than a quarter of that age group, are also past that six-month mark. Not all are eligible for booster shots, though the federal government may soon decide to [extend eligibility](#) for the Pfizer booster to everyone 18 and older.

	<p>Other countries, including Israel and Canada, have already authorized booster shots for all adults. Early data from Israel show that booster shots are effective at protecting against infection and hospitalization, at least in the short term.</p> <p>But experts worry that a national focus on boosters will detract from what should be the country's most important goal.</p> <p>"It's easy with all the discussion about boosters to lose that really important message that the vaccines are still working," said Dr. Rosenberg. "Going from an unvaccinated to a vaccinated person is still the critical step."</p>
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HEADLINE	11/11 Effects keeping students out schools 18mo.
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/11/11/world/covid-vaccine-boosters-mandates?type=style-live-updates&label=coronavirus%20updates&index=0#covid-uganda-schools
GIST	<p>As much of the world moves closer to fully opening schools, at least one nation has stuck to keeping them fully or partly closed: Uganda.</p> <p>Eighteen months into the pandemic, officials in the country have kept more than 10 million primary and secondary school students at home, with no plans to reopen their classrooms soon. And while Uganda's leaders say that the policy is the safest option, on the ground, the effects of the closures are stark.</p> <p>The "government has not left schools closed to punish you, but rather, to protect you from harm," the education minister, Janet Museveni, who is also the country's first lady, said on Twitter in September. She said that the government did not want to risk having parents become infected by students, who "would become orphans — just like H.I.V./AIDS did to many of our families."</p> <p>President Yoweri Museveni said in a televised address last month that parents should expect schools to reopen in January, along with other small businesses like bars, hair salons and recreational centers.</p> <p>In the meantime, however, young women, abandoning hopes of going to school, are getting married and starting families instead. School buildings are being converted into businesses or health clinics. Teachers are quitting, and disillusioned students are taking menial jobs like selling fruit or mining for gold.</p> <p>"The government has failed to strike a balance between the lives they are saving and the lives they are losing," said Filbert Baguma, general secretary of the Uganda National Teachers' Union.</p> <p>He noted that public spaces like markets and churches had been allowed to reopen, thus exposing the same students to the coronavirus. "Students are not any better off in terms of protection than when they were in their learning institutions," he said.</p> <p>Even Uganda's government has concluded that the sweeping closures have had a devastating effect. A report released in August by the National Planning Authority, a government agency, found that "30 percent of the learners are likely not to return to school forever" and that 3,507 primary and 832 secondary schools in the country were likely to close.</p> <p>In June, the Delta variant contributed to a surge in cases and overwhelmed hospitals, pushing the authorities to suspend gatherings and impose a 42-day lockdown. But the country now has a relatively low infection rate, recording just 67 deaths in October, and is now averaging 372 new cases per day, according to Johns Hopkins University data.</p> <p>The Education Ministry has tried to compensate by distributing home learning materials and broadcasting radio programs to help children learn remotely.</p>

But Mary Goretti Nakabugo, the executive director of Uwezo, an education organization, said that only 20 percent of families contacted in a recent poll had received the materials. Even those families who had received them rarely made use of them, she said.

Bwengye Elia, a mathematics and physics teacher in the Wakiso district of central Uganda, said that few students could afford to meet school costs on their own.

“Data is expensive, which further limits the percentage of students who can afford to continue learning online,” he said. “Barely any students are learning at all.”

Many students have dropped out to seek work instead.

Mukasa Nicholas, 18, said that he had waited six months for classes to start before moving to Kampala, the capital, to find a job. He now sells medical masks on the street, bringing in about \$2 a day.

“If my parents ask me to return to school,” he said, “I will reject them.”

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Cyber Awareness

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HEADLINE	11/12 Interpol unveils emerging cyberthreats
SOURCE	https://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/dr20211112-interpol-unveils-emerging-cyberthreats
GIST	<p>The accelerated digitalization related to the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly influenced the development of a number of cyber threats, according to the new edition of Europol’s Internet Organised Crime Threat Assessment. Criminals have been quick to abuse the current circumstances to increase profits, spreading their tentacles to various areas and exposing vulnerabilities, connected to systems, hospitals or individuals. While ransomware groups have taken advantage of widespread teleworking, scammers have abused COVID-19 fears and the fruitless search for cures online to defraud victims or gain access to their bank accounts. The increase of online shopping in general has attracted more fraudsters.</p> <p>With children spending a lot more time online, especially during lockdowns, grooming and dissemination of self-produced explicit material have increased significantly. Grey infrastructure, including services offering end-to-end encryption, VPNs and cryptocurrencies continue to be abused for the facilitation and proliferation of a large range of criminal activities. This has resulted in significant challenges for the investigation of criminal activities and the protection of victims of crime.</p> <p>In addition to expanding the efforts to tackle these threats from a law enforcement perspective, it is crucial to add another level of protection in terms of cybersecurity. The implementation of measures such as multi-factor authentication and vulnerability management are of utmost importance to decrease the possible exposure to cyber threats. Awareness raising and prevention are key components in reducing the effectiveness of cyberattacks and other cyber enabled criminal activities.</p> <p>The Key Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">· Ransomware affiliate programs enable a larger group of criminals to attack big corporations and public institutions by threatening them with multi-layered extortion methods such as DDoS attacks.· Mobile malware evolves with criminals trying to circumvent additional security measures such as two-factor authentication.· Online shopping has led to a steep increase in online fraud.· Explicit self-generated material is an increasing concern and is also distributed for profit.· Criminals continue to abuse legitimate services such as VPNs, encrypted communication services and cryptocurrencies. <p>The new edition of Europol’s Internet Organized Crime Threat Assessment, launched today, looks into the (r)evolutionary development of these trends, catalyzed by the expanded digitalization of recent years. The</p>

report was presented during the Europol-INTERPOL Cybercrime Conference. The conference gathered about 100 experts together to share their insights into the latest cybercrime trends and threats and to discuss how innovation is essential in countering cybercrime acceleration.

High Value Targets: The New Victims of Malware Attacks

Ransomware groups have used the pandemic to their advantage to launch more sophisticated and targeted attacks. While mass distributed ransomware seems to be in decline, cybercrime groups and their affiliates opt for well-orchestrated manual attacks against large corporations and government institutions. Always driven by opportunities for larger profits, in the past criminals have targeted companies which have both the financial capability to pay large ransoms and the need to rapidly resume operations in case of a successful cyberattack, which affects their main activities. The attacks on Kaseya and SolarWinds show how criminals have realized the potential in attacking digital supply chains, often going for the 'weakest link'. However, many of the most infamous groups have reduced the attacks on governments and social services in an attempt to limit the attention of law enforcement on them. DDoS attacks have re-emerged and are targeting service providers, financial institutions and businesses. Claiming to be part of two well-known threat groups, they have asked for significant ransoms. The pandemic has also facilitated the breakthrough of other threats, which were already making significant attempts to penetrate the cyberspace. Mobile malware and specifically banking Trojans have also been equipped with capabilities to intercept text messages on Android devices, compromising the two-factor authentication security protocols.

Alarming Rise of Self-Produced Explicit Material

Child abusers have exploited the increased, unsupervised presence of children online during the pandemic in order to increase their grooming activities. The acceleration of production and dissemination of child sexual exploitation material is also fueled by the proliferation of encrypted messaging applications and social media platforms. Online gaming and communication, the reduction of real-life social activities and the normalization of sexual behavior online are circumstances, which are abused by predators to target a larger number of victims. These factors create conditions for the victimization of children online during a longer period. A key threat is the production of self-generated material, an alarming trend, which younger children are also exposed to. Lured by offenders using fake identities on gaming platforms and social media, more and more young children are falling into the trap of producing and sharing explicit material. Recording without the knowledge of the victims and the further dissemination of live-streamed sexual material is another alarming threat, referred to as 'capping'. Peer-to-peer networks remain a key channel for the exchange of child abuse material, along with the Dark Web.

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HEADLINE	11/12 Hong Kong websites hacked; Apple devices
SOURCE	https://www.cyberscoop.com/hong-kong-google-zero-day-watering-hole/
GIST	<p>Suspected foreign government-backed hackers infected websites belonging to a Hong Kong-based media outlet and a pro-democracy group in a bid to install malware on visitors' Apple devices, Google researchers say.</p> <p>Google's Threat Analysis Group discovered the watering hole attack in August, which relied on a previously unreported backdoor, or zero-day flaw.</p> <p>"Based on our findings, we believe this threat actor to be a well-resourced group, likely state backed, with access to their own software engineering team based on the quality of the payload code," Google's Eyre Hernandez wrote in a blog post on Thursday. While Google didn't attribute the attackers to a specific nation, China has long been suspected of conducting cyber-espionage and sowing disinformation aimed at democracy advocates in Hong Kong.</p> <p>The hackers relied on a previously known vulnerability in macOS Catalina to set up the backdoor, Google said. Apple patched the zero-day flaw on Sept. 23.</p> <p>The backdoor enabled the attackers to carry out audio recording, execute terminal commands, file downloads and uploads, keylogging, screen capture and victim device fingerprinting.</p>

	<p>Pangu Labs presented a version of the exploit targeting the Big Sur operating system at a security conference in China in April.</p> <p>Patrick Wardle, a security researcher who focuses on Apple, found Google's discovery notable.</p> <p>"It's not everyday we come across a brand new fully-featured macOS implant to analyze," he wrote in a separate analysis on Thursday.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/12 Europol: organized cybercrime threat rising
SOURCE	https://threatpost.com/organized-cybercrime-syndicates-europol/176326/
GIST	<p>Europol reports that criminal groups are undermining the EU's economy and its society, offering everything from murder-for-hire to kidnapping, torture and mutilation.</p> <p>From encrypting communications to fencing ill-gotten gains on underground sites, organized crime is cashing in on the digital revolution.</p> <p>The latest organized crime threat assessment from Europol issues a dire warning about the corrosive effect the rising influence of criminal syndicates is having on both the economy and society of the European Union. And it's all happening online.</p> <p>"The online environment and online trade provide criminals access to expertise and sophisticated tools enabling criminal activities," The Europol Threat Assessment said. "Virtually all criminal activities now feature some online components, such as digital solutions facilitating criminal communications.</p> <p>Digital Marketplaces</p> <p>Digital marketplaces for illicit goods and services, ranging from drugs to trafficked humans, have helped organized crime access new potential victims, the report explained.</p> <p>Several steps involved in the trafficking of human beings, including recruitment of victims and advertisement of services, "have moved almost entirely to the online domain," the report said.</p> <p>"The surface web and the dark web are exploited by criminals who offer all types of illicit commodities and most illegal services online," Europol said. "The availability and accessibility of secure online channels has resulted in a diversification of the platforms used for illegal online trade. The proliferation of encrypted communication channels and social media platforms allows criminals to easily advertise their illicit offers to a greater number of potential customers."</p> <p>Spreading disinformation on social media and messaging services to lure victims across the EU into scams is another popular tactic by organized crime.</p> <p>Cybercrime-as-a-Service</p> <p>The ability to easily buy cybercrime-as-a-service has also enabled otherwise untechnical criminals to pull fraud, distributed denial of service (DDoS), ransomware attacks and more, the report adds, pointing to successes of groups in the space like TrickBot with EMOTET and Ryuk.</p> <p>"Cybercrime services can be purchased by paying a user fee, a rental fee or a percentage of the criminal profits," Europol explained. "Criminal tools such as malware, ransomware, phishing facilitators, sniffers, skimmers and distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) attacks are offered online, especially on the dark web." And never underestimate the power of Google. How-to's for almost anything imaginable can be accessed online.</p> <p>"Manuals and tutorials on offer range from the production of synthetic drugs, the manufacture of crude firearms and improvised explosive devices, to all types of cybercrime activities," the report added.</p>

Other kinds of cybercrimes lining the pockets of organized criminals include Business Email Compromise (BEC), [SIM swapping](#), phishing and cashless payment fraud, the report explained.

“The move toward cashless economies creates powerful incentives for payment fraudsters,” Europol said. “Cybercriminals seek to compromise online payments, internet and mobile banking, online payment requests, contactless payments (both card-present and not) and mobile applications.”

Cryptocurrency for Money Laundering

The report further explains that these organized crime groups use cryptocurrency for money laundering. “Illicit proceeds may be already in the form of virtual currencies or digitally converted,” the report added. “New money laundering techniques relying on cryptocurrencies involve the use of mixing services and coin swappers.”

Encrypted Communications

Encrypted communications channels are a must, but criminals are also turning to modified mobile devices without GPS, USB ports, camera or microphone, according to Europol.

“These services remove any association between the device or SIM card and the user,” Europol found in their investigation. “The encrypted interface is typically hidden and works as part of a dual operating system. These phones are sold via networks of underground resellers instead of being distributed via regular retail outlets.”

Looking forward, Europol recommends increased strategic management and investment in cybersecurity infrastructure across the EU: “Currently, Member States are progressing at different speeds in building up digital infrastructures; this may lead to potential vulnerabilities. Government services are increasingly delivered digitally, Europol predicted. Member States’ government authorities are likely to increasingly offer services digitally to cut costs and enhance their accessibility.”

Cryptocurrencies, mounting troves of personal data stored digitally and increased manipulation of public discourse could pose a threat to the fabric of the EU economy and society.

“Serious and organized crime deeply affects all layers of society; in addition to the direct impact on the daily lives of EU citizens, it also undermines the economy, state institutions and the rule of law,” Europol concluded.

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HEADLINE	11/12 Ohio hospital hit; healthcare under attack
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/analysis/breach/ohio-hospital-diverting-ambulances-canceling-appointments-amid-cyberattack
GIST	<p>Southern Ohio Medical Center was hit with a cyberattack early Thursday, Nov. 11, which forced the nonprofit provider into electronic health record (EHR) downtime procedures. The ongoing outages have forced officials to divert ambulances and cancel some patient appointments, according to a SOMC social media posting.</p> <p>“An unauthorized third-party gained access to SOMC’s computer servers in what appears to be a targeted cyberattack,” officials explained. “Patient care and safety remain our top priority as we work to resolve this situation as quickly as possible.”</p> <p>Patients with canceled appointments are being contacted directly by SOMC. The latest update shows the downtime has led to Friday appointment cancelations, including outpatient medical imaging, cancer care services, cardiovascular testing, cardiac catheterization, outpatient surgery, and outpatient rehab, as well as appointments at its medical care foundation office.</p> <p>SOMC is working with federal law enforcement and an outside security firm on the investigation. Officials said they’re continuing to assess the situation and will provide further updates when possible.</p>

The SOMC incident joins three other cyberattack-related outages [reported by healthcare](#) entities in just over a month. Currently, the Newfoundland and Labrador healthcare system is still attempting to resume full operations after a cyberattack launched on [Oct. 30](#).

The latest [advisory](#) shows the health system is still working to safely restore systems and operations and warns province residents that it appears protected health information was stolen in the attack. Government officials say they're still investigating the scope of the incident, but the data includes current and former patients and employees from the last nine to 14 years.

Hive ransomware claims Johnson Memorial Health attack

Johnson Memorial Health is still attempting to return to normal system operations, five weeks after a [cyberattack](#) that led to EHR downtime procedures and intermittent issues with its phone system. It appears the Hive ransomware group has claimed the attack, leaking data they claim to have stolen from the provider prior to deploying the attack payload.

The attack was launched on Oct. 1 and discovered by the IT team within 15 minutes, prompting an immediate system shutdown. The hospital computer and phone networks were affected by the attack and impeded providers from sharing patient information between departments, such as lab results and scans. Care was diverted from the emergency room for about a month during the recovery.

This week, hospital leadership provided an update to local news outlets that the bulk of the healthcare tech has been restored, outside of its email system. Staff are using backup email accounts to send emails. Some aspects of the network are slower than normal, including billing and charting.

The hospital is still investigating the incident, but screenshots shared with SC Media show Hive claims to have stolen patient information tied to 150,000 individuals, including Social Security numbers and next of kin details. Hive also claims to have exfiltrated 300GB of data from the hospital's file server. The data leak was first disclosed late Nov. 11.

Take note: Utah Imaging Associates reports breach impacting 584K

The Department of Health and Human Services breach reporting tool shows Utah Imaging Associates experienced a network server security incident that led to a protected health information breach impacting 583,643 patients.

However, there are no public notices detailing the security incident, and the UIA website only provides access to its Picture Archiving and Communication System (PACS) diagnostics viewer.

The breach is among the 10 largest incidents reported in [healthcare this year](#).

System hack at Urology Center of Colorado affects 138K patients

The data of 137,820 The Urology Center of Colorado ([TUCC](#)) patients was potentially compromised after an actor hacked into certain parts of its network that contained protected health information.

The system hack was first detected Sept. 8, but initial access began the previous day. The notice does not explain whether there was evidence the data was accessed, just that the affected servers contained health information.

The compromised data varied by patient and could include names, dates of birth, SSNs, contact information, medical record numbers, diagnoses, provider names, insurance carrier, treatment costs, guarantor names, and email addresses. All affected patients will receive free credit monitoring and identity protection services.

TUCC has since reset all account passwords and intends to implement additional security measures.

Maxim Healthcare reports PHI breach from 2020, far outside HIPAA timeline

A monthslong email-related security incident in 2020 possibly led to the access of protected health information tied to 65,267 [Maxim Healthcare](#) Group patients. However, the Maryland provider is just now notifying patients, 11 months after discovering the account intrusion.

On Dec. 4, Maxim detected unusual activity in several employee email accounts. The investigation into the incident found the accounts were accessed without authorization for two months between Oct. 1, 2020, and Dec. 4, 2020. Investigators were unable to determine the precise email messages or attachments viewed or accessed by the attacker.

Maxim then performed a thorough programmatic, manual review of the account contents to determine the information contained in affected accounts, which concluded on Aug. 24. The notice explains the team took another month locating contact information, then waited until Nov. 4 to release notices about the breach to patients.

Under The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act, covered entities and business associates are required to notify patients of [PHI-related breaches within 60 days of discovery](#) — not at the close of an investigation. Maxim joins a number of other covered entities that have failed to timely disclose data breaches this year.

HHS has historically issued serious civil monetary penalties against organizations that failed to timely notify patients of data breaches. In 2017, Presence Health became the first entity to face enforcement action for failing to timely notify patients of a breach. Just 836 patients were affected by an Oct. 22 breach reported to HHS in January 2014, just about a month after the 60-day timeline. The settlement included a \$475,000 civil monetary penalty.

For Maxim, as previously noted, email account compromises are notoriously labor intensive and include challenging forensic reviews that can make it difficult to make a complete determination of the exact names or contact information of the impacted individuals.

However, several covered entities have successfully notified patients within the HIPAA-required timeline despite ongoing forensics reviews, which allows patients to swiftly move to protect their identity from fraud attempts.

One of the best examples was seen with the 2019 phishing campaign against the Oregon Department of Human Services. The initial notice in March 2019 informed 350,000 patients of a potential breach of their information, but that investigators were still working to analyze more than 2 million emails in the impacted accounts to determine who and what was compromised.

The investigation continued until June 2019, where the state health department released a follow-up report that informed another 300,000 patients of the potential impact to their data, as well as the security measures they'd take to prevent a recurrence.

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HEADLINE	11/12 Australia water supplier suffers breach
SOURCE	https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/major-water-supplier-breach/
GIST	<p>One of Australia's largest regional water suppliers was breached for several months before detecting the unauthorized access, another worrying sign of weaknesses in critical infrastructure security.</p> <p>A Queensland Audit Office annual report on the water industry did not mention the provider by name but said it continues to see "significant control weaknesses in the security of information systems" across the industry.</p> <p>The breach in question occurred between August 2020 and May 2021, resulting in unauthorized access to a web server.</p>

"Threat actors targeted an older and more vulnerable version of the system. The web server that stores customer information contained suspicious files that increased visitor traffic to an online video platform," the report explained.

"As entities use more cloud-based services (which provide remote access to systems), cyber risk vulnerabilities and exposures must be continuously assessed. Entities need to make sure their users are aware of their responsibilities in managing cyber risks."

[A local report](#) identified the provider as Sunwater, one of the state's largest regional providers.

The auditor explained that it had taken corrective measures, including patching, more robust password practices, and network monitoring.

Although this breach appears to have been caused by financially motivated cyber-criminals, with no impact on customers, utility providers are increasingly being targeted by more concerning attacks designed to cause service disruption and even harm citizens.

In 2019 a [former employee at a Kansas plant](#) accessed and shut down some of the key processes used to disinfect water. Earlier this year, in the [Florida city of Oldsmar](#), an actor tried to change the water supply's chemical balance by remotely logging into a SCADA system.

Last month, the [US authorities issued an alert warning](#) of ongoing malicious cyber-activity targeting the country's water and wastewater systems (WWS) sector.

Spear-phishing, compromise of Remote Desktop Protocol (RDP) systems, and exploitation of unpatched or outdated software were the key threat vectors highlighted in the report.

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HEADLINE	11/12 'King of fraud' gets 10yrs
SOURCE	https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/king-of-fraud-gets-ten-years/
GIST	<p>A Russian cyber-criminal has been sent to prison in the United States for defrauding American companies out of millions of dollars.</p> <p>Aleksandr Zhukov ran a sophisticated digital advertising scam through purported advertising network Media Methane.</p> <p>In June, he was convicted of wire fraud conspiracy, wire fraud, money laundering conspiracy, and money laundering.</p> <p>Zhukov, the self-styled "king of fraud," worked with accomplices to trick victim companies into believing that they had purchased genuine digital advertising space. In reality, Media Methane was merely a smoke and mirrors operation, deploying a combination of coding and domain spoofing to give the false impression that victims' ads were being viewed.</p> <p>"Rather than place advertisements on real publishers' web pages where human internet users would see them, Zhukov rented more than 2,000 computer servers housed in commercial datacenters in Dallas, Texas, Amsterdam and the Netherlands, and programmed the datacenter computer servers (the "bots") to simulate humans viewing ads on webpages," stated the US Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of New York in a statement released Wednesday.</p> <p>The criminals programmed the bots to load genuine ads on blank web pages and then deceived their victims into believing that the ads were loading on authentic websites.</p> <p>Zhukov and his co-conspirators spoofed the domains of more than 6,000 publishers, including the <i>New York Times</i>, the <i>New York Post</i>, the <i>New York Daily News</i>, <i>Newsday</i>, and the <i>Staten Island Advance</i>.</p>

Return to Top	<p>Victims of the scam include the Texas Scottish Rite Hospital for Children and household names Nestle Purina and Time Warner Cable.</p> <p>Zhukov and his co-conspirators stole more than \$7m through the scam, which they ran between September 2014 and December 2016.</p> <p>On November 10, Zhukov was sentenced to ten years in prison and ordered to pay \$3,827,493 in forfeiture.</p> <p>Zhukov's Methbot was initially discovered by HUMAN (formerly White Ops) in 2016.</p> <p>According to HUMAN Security: “We then took a leading role in engaging with law enforcement and many of our ad tech partners to create the largest private/public sector collaboration in history to orchestrate a major botnet takedown.”</p> <p>It added, “After seeing how important cross-industry collaboration is to defeating cybercrime, we created The Human Collective – a program built for companies looking to be at the forefront of fighting fraud.”</p>
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HEADLINE	11/12 BotenaGO malware hits IoT devices
SOURCE	https://www.hackread.com/botenago-malware-hits-iot-devices/
GIST	<p>The IT security researchers at AT&T Alien Labs have tracked down malware utilizing over 30 different exploits to compromise routers and Internet of Things (IoT) devices.</p> <p>According to their analysis, the malware is an early beta version linked with the infamous Mirai botnet. They opined that this malware is difficult to detect and can exploit millions of internet-connected devices.</p> <p><i>Why is it called BotenaGo?</i> AlienLabs' security researchers named the malware BotenaGo because it is written in the Go (Google's Golang) open-source programming language. It targets Linux-embedded routers and IoT devices through botnets.</p> <p>Researchers mentioned that, as per Intezer's analysis, there had been a 2,000% rise in the use of the Go programming language for creating malware in recent years. According to AlienLabs' security researcher Ofer Caspi, the malware creates a backdoor and then waits until it receives a target from a remote operator to attack.</p> <p><i>How Does it Attack?</i> When the malware receives a command from a remote operator, usually through ports 19412 and 31412, it executes remote shell commands/instructions. These commands are executed on devices where the malware has already exploited a vulnerability. It then uses various links, each having a different payload, after analyzing the infected system.</p> <p>Researchers couldn't identify the threat actors who developed BotenaGo or the scale of devices vulnerable to this malware. However, they noticed that antivirus protections don't recognize this malware and usually misidentify it as a Mirai malware variant.</p> <p><i>What Makes BotenaGo Different?</i> This malware is different because it doesn't actively communicate with a C2 server, which researchers found surprising because most malware has a link. They believe that BotenaGo could be part of a more extensive suite and one of the various infection modules of an extensive attack. Or else it could still be in its beta phase or linked with the Mirai malware family.</p> <p>In their report published on Thursday, researchers noted that malware developers are continually identifying new techniques to upgrade their capabilities.</p>

"In this case, new malware written in Golang can run as a botnet on different OS platforms with small modifications," they noted.

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HEADLINE	11/12 Surge HTML smuggling phishing attacks
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/microsoft-warns-of-surge-in-html-smuggling-phishing-attacks/
GIST	<p>Microsoft has seen a surge in malware campaigns using HTML smuggling to distribute banking malware and remote access trojans (RAT).</p> <p>While HTML smuggling is not a new technique, Microsoft is seeing it increasingly used by threat actors to evade detection, including the Nobelium hacking group behind the SolarWinds attacks.</p> <p>How HTML smuggling works</p> <p>HTML smuggling is a technique used in phishing campaigns that use HTML5 and JavaScript to hide malicious payloads in encoded strings in an HTML attachment or webpage. These strings are then decoded by a browser when a user opens the attachment or clicks a link.</p> <p>For example, a phishing HTML attachment could include a harmless link to a known website, thus not being seen as malicious. However, when a user clicks on the link, JavaScript will decode an included encrypted or encoded string and convert it into a malicious attachment that is downloaded instead, as shown in the code below.</p> <p>Since the malicious payload is encoded initially, it looks harmless to security software and is not detected as malicious. Furthermore, as JavaScript assembles the payload on the target system, it bypasses any firewalls and security defenses that would usually catch the malicious file at the perimeter.</p> <p>Deployment cases</p> <p>Microsoft researchers have seen this technique used in Mekotio campaigns that deliver banking trojans and also in highly-targeted NOBELIUM attacks.</p> <p>HTML smuggling campaigns are also used to drop the AsyncRAT or NJRAT remote access trojans, or the TrickBot trojan used to breach networks and deploy ransomware.</p> <p>The attacks usually start with a phishing email containing an HTML link in the body of the message or a malicious HTML file as an attachment.</p> <p>If either is clicked, a ZIP file is dropped using HTML smuggling. This archive contains a JavaScript file downloader that fetches additional files from a command and control server (C2) to install on the victim's device.</p> <p>In some cases, the created archives are password-protected for additional detection evasion against endpoint security controls. However, the password to open it is provided in the original HTML attachment, so the victim must enter it manually.</p> <p>Once the script is launched, a base64-encoded PowerShell command is executed that downloads and installs the TrickBot trojan or other malware.</p> <p>A 2020 report from Menlo Security also mentions the Duri malware group as one of the actors who actively uses HTML smuggling for payload distribution, but the technique was first seen in the wild since at least 2018.</p> <p>Microsoft first warned about a sudden uptick in this activity in July 2021, urging admins to raise their defenses against it.</p>

HEADLINE	11/12 Top-level domains threat actors like most
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/these-are-the-top-level-domains-threat-actors-like-the-most/
GIST	<p>Out of over a thousand top-level domain choices, cyber-criminals and threat actors prefer a small set of 25, which accounts for 90% of all malicious sites.</p> <p>Six out of the top 10 of these 25 top-level domains (TLD) are handled by authorities in developing countries, hosting a disproportionately large number of risky sites compared to their populations.</p> <p>These stats are revealed in an in-depth analysis from researchers at Palo Alto Networks, who took a deep dive into the TLDs commonly used by threat actors and why they are being chosen.</p> <p>The categories picked for analysis are malware, phishing, command and control (C2), and grayware (adware, 'joke malware,' spyware).</p> <p>The worst cases</p> <p>Using data collected on October 7th, 2020, Palo Alto Networks analyzed domains categorized by their Advanced URL Filtering service, and that met specific criteria.</p> <p>"First, we only study domains categorized by the Advanced URL Filtering service, and we only consider registered domains (also called root domains). Additionally, we validate whether domains existed the past one year by checking zone files and passive DNS, and by issuing active DNS queries. We do not consider domains that we categorize as parked, insufficient content or unknown for our calculations," explains the research by Palo Alto Networks Unit42.</p> <p>"Further, when calculating reputation scores, we don't consider domains sinkholed for preemptive measures as malicious. Finally, we only consider TLDs with at least a hundred domains, as smaller TLDs likely have policies in place restricting entities allowed to register domain names. This blog post is based on data collected on Oct. 7, 2021."</p> <p>Using this data, Palo Alto Networks created the following summary table to give an overview of the malicious use of the top TLDs for each category and their cumulative distribution (CD). The higher the CD, the more that particular TLD is used for the category.</p> <p>The most popular top-level domain is .com, which has an average ratio of malicious domains. Crooks tend to use it because it adds legitimacy and generally improves their success rates.</p> <p>Those that fair the worse in the 'cumulative distribution' category are .xyz, .icu, .ru, .cn, .uk, and tk. This means that most of the bad stuff circulating the web in terms of volume comes from these domains.</p> <p>The TLDs that distribute malware the most are .ga, .xyz, .cf, .tk, .org, and .ml.</p> <p>Phishing actors prefer to use .net domains, with .pw, .top, .ga, and .icu, following with notable volumes. However, the researchers found phishing to be one of the most evenly distributed categories, with 99% of the domains spreading across 92 different TLDs.</p> <p>Grayware is being distributed through .org, .info, .co, .ru, .work, .net, and .club domains, indicative of the trickery that underpins this category of software.</p> <p>Finally, C2 infrastructure usually relies on .top, .gq, .ga, .ml, .cf, .info, .cn, and .tk.</p> <p>Palo Alto compiled the following table in terms of the rate of malicious domains compared to the total registrations for a TLD.</p>

In the table below, the MAD score is the 'median of the absolute deviation,' which means that a higher score represents an unusually large number of malicious domain registrations for that TLD.

Why does any of that matter?

The fact that the TLD domains for Tokelau, a small island in the Pacific, are in the top ten of all malicious categories means that the relevant registration authority is likely not following strict reviewing practices.

"One of the most fascinating stories in the domain name world is how .tk, the ccTLD of a small Pacific island called Tokelau, became one of the most populous TLDs in the world. Domain registrations contributed at one point [one-sixth of Tokelau's income](#)," explains the [report by Palo Alto Networks](#).

"Their TLD became popular by providing free domain registrations, where the source of income for the TLD operator is through advertisement rather than domain registration fees. Unfortunately, their domain registration policy also invites abuse, spam and a large amount of sensitive content, as we can observe in Table 1."

The same applies to .pw and .ws domains, controlled by the Republic of Palau and Western Samoa. These countries offer cheap or even free domain registrations to generate income from ads running on sites.

This advertising model generates significant revenue from domain registrations but also opens the door for widescale abuse.

This, of course, doesn't mean that large TLDs such as .net, .org, and .xyz, can afford to relax against abusive registrations. On the contrary, the stats show that popular TLDs are more responsible for clearing up malicious registrations.

In many cases, legitimate domains on these larger TLDs are compromised by threat actors, so they were not registered with malicious intent.

Another reason why such reports are helpful is that they can help Internet security solutions strengthen their malicious domain detection algorithms.

These rates can be used as factors that are evaluated in conjunction with other elements to generate a total risk score when determining if security software or gateways should block an URL.

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Click on source link to view referenced tables

HEADLINE	11/13 Fake end-to-end encrypted chat: spyware
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/fake-end-to-end-encrypted-chat-app-distributes-android-spyware/
GIST	<p>The GravityRAT remote access trojan is being distributed in the wild again, this time under the guise of an end-to-end encrypted chat application called SoSafe Chat.</p> <p>This particular RAT (remote access trojan) targets predominately Indian users, being distributed by Pakistani actors.</p> <p>The telemetry data on the most recent campaign shows that the targeting scope hasn't changed, and Gravity is still targeting high-profile individuals in India, like officers of the Armed Forces.</p> <p>Disguised as a secure chat app</p> <p>In 2020, the malware was targeting people via an Android app named 'Travel Mate Pro,' but since the pandemic has slowed down traveling, the actors moved to a new guise.</p>

The app is now called ‘SoSafe Chat’ and is promoted as a secure messaging application that features end-to-end encryption.

The SoSafe Chat website

The website that likely played a role in the distribution of the app (sosafe.co[.]in) remains online today, but the download link and the registration form are no longer working.

The channel and method of distribution remain unknown, but it was likely by driving traffic to the site through malvertising, social media posts, and instant messages to targets.

Extensive spying abilities

Once installed on a target’s device, the spyware can perform a wide range of malicious behavior, allowing the threat actors to exfiltrate data, spy on the victim, and track their location.

The complete list of malicious behavior includes

- Read SMS, Call Logs, and Contacts data
- Change or modify system settings
- Read current cellular network information, the phone number and the serial number of the victim’s phone, the status of any ongoing calls, and a list of any Phone Accounts registered on the device
- Read or write the files on the device’s external storage
- Record audio
- Gets connected network information
- Get the device’s location

According to [researchers at Cyble](#), the list of permissions that the malware requests for this functionality is naturally quite extensive, but it can still appear justified for an IM app.

Compared to the 2020 version, GravityRAT has added the ability to record audio and added mobile-specific features like location fetching and cellular network data exfiltration.

Before the 2020 version, GravityRAT would [exclusively target Windows](#) machines, not having the ability to infect mobile devices.

As such, the reemergence of the malware in the wild in targeting mobile devices indicates that its authors are actively developing it.

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HEADLINE	11/12 Costco discloses data breach
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/costco-discloses-data-breach-after-finding-credit-card-skimmer/
GIST	<p>Costco Wholesale Corporation has warned customers in notification letters sent this month that their payment card information might have been stolen while recently shopping at one of its stores.</p> <p>The retail giant (also known as Costco Wholesale and Costco) is an American multinational that operates a large chain of membership-only retail stores, the fifth-largest retailer worldwide, and the tenth-largest corporation in the US by total revenue according to Fortune 500 rankings.</p> <p>It has 737 warehouses worldwide, and it also operates e-commerce websites targeting multiple world regions, including the Americas, Europe, and Asia.</p> <p>Skimmer device planted at Costco warehouse</p> <p>Costco discovered the breach after finding a payment card skimming device in one of its warehouses during a routine check conducted by Costco personnel.</p>

	<p>The company removed the device, notified the authorities, and is now working with law enforcement agents who are investigating the incident.</p> <p>"We recently discovered a payment card skimming device at a Costco warehouse you recently visited," Costco told potentially impacted customers in breach notification letters.</p> <p>"Our member records indicate that you swiped your payment card to make a purchase at the affected terminal during the time the device may have been operating."</p> <p>Customer payment info likely stolen</p> <p>Costco added that individuals impacted by this incident might have had their payment information stolen if those who planted the card theft device were able to gain access to the info before the skimmer was found and removed.</p> <p>"If unauthorized parties were able to remove information from the device before it was discovered, they may have acquired the magnetic stripe of your payment card, including your name, card number, card expiration date, and CVV," Costco revealed.</p> <p>The retailer advised the customers to monitor their bank and credit card statements for fraudulent charges and report suspicious transactions to relevant financial institutions.</p> <p>Data breach notification letters sent to affected individuals did not disclose the total number of impacted customers or the warehouse location where the skimmer device was found.</p> <p>While the company didn't reveal the exact timeline of the incident, Costco customers have complained about unauthorized transactions [1, 2, 3] on their payment cards since at least February [4].</p>
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HEADLINE	11/12 QBot returns: new wave infections
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/qbot-returns-for-a-new-wave-of-infections-using-squirrelwaffle/
GIST	<p>The activity of the QBot (also known as Quakbot) banking trojan is spiking again, and analysts from multiple security research firms attribute this to the rise of Squirrelwaffle.</p> <p>Squirrelwaffle emerged last month as one of the most likely candidates to fill the void left by the take-down of Emotet, and unfortunately, these predictions are quickly being confirmed.</p> <p>A new wave of attacks</p> <p>Researchers at TrendMicro have observed a new distribution campaign for QBot relying on Visual Basic Macros (VBA) macros in Microsoft Word documents sent as attachments in phishing emails.</p> <p>Previous Qbot campaigns used Excel macros, which are still present in some cases, even if they are more scarce now.</p> <p>The victim still has to manually open the document and "Enable Content" on their Microsoft Office suite to let the macro code run, dropping a QBot payload on the system.</p> <p>The rest of the process chain hasn't changed much compared to previous versions, still downloading a DLL file as the core payload and setting the same scheduled task for persistence as before.</p> <p>Qbot is also known to partner with ransomware operations to provide them with initial access to a network. QBot has previously collaborated with ransomware gangs to deploy REvil, Egregor, ProLock, PwndLocker, and MegaCortex strains.</p>

Return to Top	<p>We shouldn't forget that even if these compromises never evolve to file-encryption events, QBot can do significant damage on its own.</p> <p>The additional modules downloaded by the QBot malware can grab browser cookies, passwords, emails, drop Cobalt Strike, enable lateral movement, and turn the infected machine into a proxy for C2 traffic.</p> <p>Riding the Squirrel Sentinel Labs published a report on the rise of the SquirrelWaffle malware loader, linking it directly to QBot, which is dropped as second stage malware.</p> <p>Researchers at Minerva Labs have also drawn a similar conclusion, seeing the following delivery scheme:</p> <p>SquirrelWaffle also uses VBA macros to execute a PowerShell command that retrieves its payload and launches it.</p> <p>Unlike Emotet, who used a wide range of phishing lures, the SquirrelWaffle is not doing a great job creating convincing spam mails, keeping the infections in check.</p> <p>The creation of more convincing phishing emails could be outsourced or quickly resolved by contacting an expert in that part of phishing operations, leading to a more significant number of SquirrelWaffle infections.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/12 Email filters duped by tiny font size
SOURCE	https://heimdalsecurity.com/blog/email-filters-duped-by-tiny-font-size-in-bec-phishing-attacks/?web_view=true
GIST	<p>A new Business Email Compromise (BEC) operation aimed at Microsoft 365 consumers employs a variety of highly developed obfuscation techniques in phishing emails that can trick natural language processing filters and go unnoticed by users.</p> <p>The operation, called One Font because of the way it conceals text in a one-point font size within mails, was initially spotted in September by cybersecurity researchers at email security firm Avanan.</p> <p>According to a report issued by the researchers, threat actors are also hiding links within the Cascading Style Sheets (CSS) in their phishing emails.</p> <p>This is yet another strategy used to baffle natural language filters such as Microsoft's Natural Language Processing (NLP).</p> <p>Cybersecurity specialist Jeremy Fuchs stated that the One Font operation also includes messages with links coded within the font> tag, and when combined with the other obfuscation tactics, reduces the potency of email filters that rely on natural language for evaluation.</p> <p>This breaks semantic analysis, which leads many solutions to treat it as a marketing email, as opposed to phishing. Natural language filters see random text; human readers see what the attackers want them to see.</p> <p>A Similar Campaign Was Discovered in 2018 In 2018, researchers identified a similar operation dubbed ZeroFont, which employed similar approaches to evade Microsoft NLP in its Office 365 security solutions.</p> <p>According to them, just like ZeroFont, One Font attacks Office 365 enterprises, an action that can result in BEC attacks, and eventually damage the company's network if the emails aren't detected and users are deceived into handing over their passwords.</p> <p>The Campaign Explained</p>

	<p>Once it reaches mailboxes and makes users believe that is an authentic message, the One Font campaign employs standard phishing social-engineering techniques to capture their attention.</p> <p>Then, the threat actors present what appears to be a password-expiration notification, using urgent messaging to entice the target to click on a malicious link.</p> <p>The fraudulent link, according to Avanan analysts, directs victims to a phishing website where they appear to be typing their credentials in order to update their passwords. Instead, cybercriminals steal their credentials to use them for malicious purposes.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/13 Warning: 3G shutdown impacts vulnerable
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2021/11/13/3g-service-ending-fcc/
GIST	<p>The wireless networks that underpin an assortment of devices, including life-alert alarms, older cellphones and tablets, are about to shut down, an action that consumer advocates say will leave some of society's most vulnerable people without critical communications tools.</p> <p>When they were rolled out nearly two decades ago, 3G wireless networks served as the bedrock of an explosion in cellphones and connected devices. Many devices have moved to 4G networks and newer phones are now moving onto 5G.</p> <p>But a motley assortment still relies on the more rudimentary 3G service — ranging from location sensors that track school buses to connected breathalyzers police use to monitor convicted drunk drivers — and consumer advocates are urging the Federal Communications Commission to slow the change, which is set to start in February.</p> <p>Older and low-income Americans are more likely to be affected by the shift, these advocates say. If they don't upgrade in time, their phones and life-alert devices won't be able to call 911 or other emergency services, government regulators warn.</p> <p>"We need to make sure that we have the timelines that are necessary to make sure we can get everyone upgraded or switched off to new technologies so that nobody does get inadvertently left behind," said Ryan Johnston, policy counsel of Next Century Cities, a nonprofit organization that works with cities, town and villages on Internet access and adoption. "That's absolutely the last thing that we want."</p> <p>There's little current data available on how many Americans still rely on phones or other critical emergency devices that can connect only to 3G networks. A study from the market analysis firm OpenSignal said that as of 2018, nearly 20 percent of Americans were still on 3G networks.</p> <p>Companies have long planned to phase out 3G networks to free up valuable resources for 5G networks, which carriers say will bring faster speeds and allow more mobile devices to connect than ever before. But the transition has been complicated by the pandemic, as safety concerns hampered outreach, especially to older Americans, and snarled supply chains globally, adding to a chip shortage that makes it more difficult to replace outdated devices.</p> <p>Phone carriers have resisted slowing the transition, arguing that they have warned for years that the transition is coming and that they've taken extensive steps to ensure that their customers aren't disconnected.</p> <p>AT&T, which plans to shutter its network in February, says it has reached out to affected customers and provided them with discounted or in some instances free phone upgrades. Other networks, including T-Mobile, have delayed their shutdowns until slightly later to accommodate people who still haven't upgraded: T-Mobile will shut down Sprint's 3G network on March 31, 2022; Verizon has said it will shut down its network on Dec. 31, 2022.</p>

But older Americans particularly are finding the transition challenging, especially as the delta variant makes them wary of contact with technicians. Len Fellen, an 87-year-old resident of Jackson, N.J., has suffered two strokes and has diabetes. He relied on a 3G-connected medical alert necklace at home, which he found out he would need to replace.

“I really didn’t want anyone in the house,” he said, noting that he’s very strict about [coronavirus](#) protocols. Fellen, who has a degree in electrical engineering, opted to install a new system himself with the help of a technician over the phone. He said it required technical knowledge and the ability to carefully follow instructions.

Others have found themselves going to extraordinary lengths to help relatives upgrade. Andrew, who spoke on the condition that only his first name be used because of privacy concerns, flew from his home in New Jersey to Florida to upgrade his 89-year-old mother’s Life Station emergency alert system in October to ensure that technicians wouldn’t enter her house. Life Station’s systems rely on AT&T’s wireless network.

“During the pandemic, it’s hard enough as it is to care for my mom,” he said in an interview. “I don’t need to be thinking about this device not working. It always works.”

Even law enforcement officials are warning they aren’t ready. In North Dakota, police use 3G-connected breathalyzers and bracelets to ensure the sobriety of about 700 people who’ve been convicted of crimes involving alcohol, driving under the influence and domestic violence. A special agent for the North Dakota Bureau of Criminal Investigation, the state’s premier law enforcement agency, recently wrote a letter to the FCC, asking for more time to transition its electronic monitoring software to newer wireless networks.

“This will have a direct impact on the safety of citizens across the nation who utilize our roadways,” the agent, Duane Stanley, wrote.

The transition has been a particular challenge during the pandemic for the alarm industry, because companies often rely on in-home visits to install upgraded systems.

The Alarm Industry Communications Committee, an industry group representing a wide range of alarm companies and personal emergency response systems, says its member companies still have between 4 million and 5 million systems to upgrade.

John Brady, the chief executive officer of Connect America, one of the association’s members that makes emergency alert devices for seniors and other patients, said the company had planned for the transition away from 3G. But suddenly its technicians were unable to enter the homes of its customers, who are largely elderly or sick.

“All of the plans that we had as an industry basically just got blown up,” said Brady, who also serves as a spokesman for the Alarm Industry Communications Committee. “We lost the majority of 2020 to get out and do this deployment.”

Consumer advocates and the alarm industry have been pressing the FCC to step in and ensure that companies extend their timelines for a shutdown until at least the end of 2022. The alarm industry filed a petition calling for the agency to intervene in AT&T’s planned shutdown, and consumer advocates have filed additional comments.

AT&T says that it has spent three years working with customers to transition away from 3G, and that any delay would undermine the shift to 5G — and slow down the new services and jobs that wireless technology could usher in.

“This petition would undermine the evolution to 5G, as it seeks to force us to devote scarce spectrum resources to support relatively few, obsolete 3G-only devices rather than repurposing the spectrum to enhance 5G capacity,” AT&T spokesperson Margaret L. Boles said in a statement.

Consumer advocates say telecom providers also have strong financial incentives to shut down the older networks. They're expensive for companies to operate, and as time goes on, they generate lower financial returns as more people migrate to newer, faster options, said Harold Feld, a senior vice president at Public Knowledge. He's also concerned that the transition could be exploited by phone carriers to upsell customers. Many companies are currently offering consumers free phones or discounted rates as they transition to faster networks.

"Once those rates end, you're going to have potentially higher fees for various services that you might get free on introductory plans," Feld said.

The FCC so far has taken a largely passive approach to the transition. The commission is "reviewing the record that's been compiled on this issue," said Paloma Perez, a spokeswoman for the FCC. That includes comments various companies and advocacy groups filed after the Alarm Industry Communications Committee filed its petition challenging AT&T's timeline. AT&T is significant, Feld said, because its networks are widely used by alarm companies, as well as people with prepaid phones.

The FCC has issued [an online guide](#) about the shutdown for consumers and has shared it with more than 2,000 partners around the country, including AARP, state broadcast associations and other groups.

This isn't the first time there has been a transition like this. Many carriers shut down their 2G networks over the years to free up airwaves for 4G networks. But Feld said the stakes are different this time because of how ubiquitous wireless technology has become.

"We didn't have the embedded use in all aspects of our lives for wireless that we have now," he said.

The FCC has intervened before when there were concerns that phasing out old technology would leave people vulnerable in emergencies, said Tom Wheeler, who chaired the FCC during the administration of President Barack Obama. He confronted a similar challenge during his tenure after Hurricane Sandy, when telecom companies did not want to replace landlines wiped out by the disaster. The move raised alarms because landlines enable people to call emergency services even when the power is out. Ultimately, Wheeler said, the FCC brokered a deal where the phone companies provided backup batteries to ensure that people would still be able to use wireless phones in an emergency.

"That's what the FCC gets paid for," he said.

In the meantime, consumer advocates are focusing on alerting city governments about the transition and how it might disproportionately affect low-income and elderly Americans, so they can take inventory of who in their communities might need to upgrade.

"A lot of the time, there's a really large informational disconnect between what's happening at the FCC and what's happening on the ground with the municipalities we work with," Johnston said.

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HEADLINE	11/13 Hackers compromise FBI email system
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/nation/fbis-email-system-compromised-hackers-warn-of-cyber-threat/
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — Hackers compromised the Federal Bureau of Investigation's external email system on Saturday.</p> <p>The hackers sent out tens of thousands of emails from an FBI email account warning about a possible cyberattack, according to the Spamhaus Project, which tracks spam and related cyber threats. The FBI said it, along with the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, is "aware of the incident this morning involving fake emails from an @ic.fbi.gov email account."</p>

“This is an ongoing situation, and we are not able to provide any additional information at this time,” the FBI said in a statement.

The FBI has multiple email systems, and the one that appears to have been hacked on Saturday is a public-facing one that agents and employees can use to email with the public, according to Austin Berglas, head of professional services at the cybersecurity company BlueVoyant. There’s a separate email system agents are required to use when transmitting classified information, he said.

“This is not the classified system that was compromised,” said Berglas, who is also a former assistant special agent in charge of the FBI’s New York office cyber branch. “This is an externally facing account that is used to share and communicate unclassified information.”

The attacks started at midnight Saturday in New York with a subsequent campaign beginning at 2 a.m., according to Spamhaus. The nonprofit said it estimates the spam messages ultimately reached at least 100,000 mailboxes.

The emails came with the subject line: “Urgent: threat actor in systems.” The message was signed by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and warned recipients that the threat actor appeared to be cybersecurity expert Vinny Troia, who last year penned an investigation of the hacking group The Dark Overlord.

There was no malware attached to the emails, according to Spamhaus. The group speculated that the hackers could have been attempting to smear Troia or were staging a nuisance attack to flood the FBI with calls.

Troia didn’t respond to a request for comment. The FBI urged consumers to be cautious and report any suspicious activity.

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HEADLINE	11/12 CSIS concern: violent online rhetoric
SOURCE	https://news.trust.org/item/20211112210312-134d7
GIST	<p>OTTAWA, Nov 12 (Reuters) - Canada's spy service said on Friday it was increasingly concerned about the rise of violent ideologically motivated online rhetoric, which it blamed in part on tensions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.</p> <p>The Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) said since the start of the pandemic, threats posed by extremists had "evolved with unprecedented multiplicity and fluidity".</p> <p>COVID-19, it said, had worsened existing strains of xenophobia and anti-authoritarianism. Violent extremists were exploiting the pandemic by amplifying false information about government measures and the virus, it said.</p> <p>Protesters opposed to mandatory vaccinations have blocked access to hospitals across Canada and abused medical staff, both in person and online.</p> <p>"Online rhetoric that is increasingly violent and calls for the arrest and execution of specific individuals is of increasing concern," CSIS said in a statement.</p> <p>CSIS said that since 2014, people motivated in whole or in part by extremist ideological views had killed 25 people and wounded 41 in Canada. This was more than those motivated by religious or political extremism.</p> <p>In June, four members of a Canadian Muslim family were run over and killed by a man in a pick-up truck in an attack the police said was driven by hate.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/12 Cryptocurrency quantum computing issue
SOURCE	https://www.cnet.com/personal-finance/crypto/cryptocurrency-faces-a-quantum-computing-problem/
GIST	<p>Cryptocurrencies hold the potential to change finance, eliminating middlemen and bringing accounts to millions of unbanked people around the world. Quantum computers could upend the way pharmaceuticals and materials are designed by bringing their extraordinary power to the process.</p> <p>Here's the problem: The blockchain accounting technology that powers cryptocurrencies could be vulnerable to sophisticated attacks and forged transactions if quantum computing matures faster than efforts to future-proof digital money.</p> <p>Cryptocurrencies are secured by a technology called public key cryptography. The system is ubiquitous, protecting your online purchases and scrambling your communications for anyone other than the intended recipient. The technology works by combining a public key, one that anyone can see, with a private key that's for your eyes only.</p> <p>If current progress continues, quantum computers will be able to crack public key cryptography, potentially creating a serious threat to the crypto world, where some currencies are valued at hundreds of billions of dollars. If encryption is broken, attackers can impersonate the legitimate owners of cryptocurrency, NFTs or other such digital assets.</p> <p>"Once quantum computing becomes powerful enough, then essentially all the security guarantees will go out of the window," Dawn Song, a computer security entrepreneur and professor at the University of California, Berkeley, told the Collective[i] Forecast forum in October. "When public key cryptography is broken, users could be losing their funds and the whole system will break."</p> <p>Quantum computers get their power by manipulating data stored on qubits, elements like charged atoms that are subject to the peculiar physics governing the ultrasmall. To crack encryption, quantum computers will need to harness thousands of qubits, vastly more than the dozens corralled by today's machines. The machines will also need persistent qubits that can perform calculations much longer than the fleeting moments possible right now.</p> <p>But makers of quantum computers are working hard to address those shortcomings. They're stuffing ever more qubits into machines and working on quantum error correction methods to help qubits perform more-sophisticated and longer calculations.</p> <p>"We expect that within a few years, sufficiently powerful computers will be available" for cracking blockchains open, said Nir Minerbi, CEO of quantum software maker Classiq Technologies.</p> <p>Fixing cryptocurrencies' quantum computing problem</p> <p>The good news for cryptocurrency fans is the quantum computing problem can be fixed by adopting the same post-quantum cryptography technology that the computing industry already has begun developing. The US government's National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), trying to get ahead of the problem, is several years into a careful process to find quantum-proof cryptography algorithms with involvement from researchers around the globe.</p> <p>Indeed, several cryptocurrency and blockchain efforts are actively working on quantum resistant software:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Ethereum project, which created the biggest cryptocurrency after Bitcoin in terms of total value, has begun charting a post-quantum course. Justin Drake, a researcher at the Ethereum Foundation, detailed quantum resistance ideas in Ethereum 3.0 at the StarkWare conference in 2019. That's likely a long ways off, though: Ethereum's current transition to Ethereum 2.0 is taking years. • Some people are building new cryptocurrency and blockchain technology designed for the quantum computing era. That includes Quantum Resistant Ledger and Bitcoin Post Quantum, which despite the name is unrelated to the original Bitcoin cryptocurrency. These efforts employ post-quantum algorithms to protect against future quantum cracking.

- [Cambridge Quantum Computing](#), a startup merging with quantum computer maker Honeywell, is working on [quantum security technology](#) that "can be applied to any blockchain network." It aims to secure both the communications among computers storing blockchain data and the signatures used to encrypt and sign blockchain data.
- The [Hyperledger Foundation](#), an open-source software project geared for business uses of blockchain, has begun working on post-quantum cryptography through its [Ursa](#) effort, says Daniela Barbosa, Hyperledger's executive director. Ursa is a library of cryptography software Hyperledger projects can use.

A problem with the post-quantum cryptography algorithms under consideration so far, though, is that they generally need longer numeric encryption keys and longer processing times, says Peter Chapman, CEO of quantum computer maker [IonQ](#). That could substantially increase the amount of computing horsepower needed to house blockchains.

The problem with decentralized governance

Many cryptocurrencies, like Bitcoin, are decentralized by design, overseen in effect by anyone who participates in each cryptocurrency network. To update a cryptocurrency's inner workings, people trying to upgrade a cryptocurrency must convince more than half of participants to ["fork" the cryptocurrency into a new version](#).

The real quantum test for cryptocurrencies will be governance structures, not technologies, says Hunter Jensen, chief technology officer of [Permission.io](#), a company using cryptocurrency for a targeted advertising system.

Such governance could reward cryptocurrencies that have stronger central powers, such as [Dash with its masternodes](#) or even ["govcoins" issued by central banks](#), that can in principle move more swiftly to adopt post-quantum protection. But it presents a conundrum in the crypto community, which often rejects the idea of authority.

"It will be the truly decentralized currencies which will get hit if their communities are too slow and disorganized to act," said Andersen Cheng, chief executive at [Post Quantum](#), a London based company that sells post-quantum encryption technology.

Other quantum problems with cryptocurrencies

Another risk is that blockchains rely on a digital fingerprinting technology called hashing that quantum computers could disrupt. That's likely to be fixable with more-modest technology updates, though.

The [cryptocurrency wallets](#) people use to keep track of their digital assets could also be vulnerable to quantum computing. These wallets store private keys people need to access their assets recorded on the blockchain. A successful attack could empty a wallet.

"How do you force users to upgrade keys? That answer is not so straightforward and likely the most dangerous part," said Joe Genereux, senior cryptography and security engineer at [browser maker Brave](#), which uses its own Basic Attention Token (BAT) cryptocurrency for an ad system that pays users. "I think cryptocurrencies that have better governance or post-quantum designs baked in early can get around this issue better."

Ultimately, though, cryptocurrency's organic, self-directed development suggests people will update the digital asset technology to surmount quantum computing's challenges, says [David Sacco](#), who teaches at the University of New Haven.

"The beauty of the ecosystem," he said, "is that anyone can do it if they understand the technology."

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HEADLINE	11/12 Newfoundland healthcare system hacked
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/12/world/canada/newfoundland-cyberattack.html

For many months now, the residents of Newfoundland and Labrador have had to put up with canceled or delayed medical procedures and appointments. For a long time — like people in the rest of Canada, and around the world — their predicament was due to the pandemic.

But lately, the trouble has come from a new source — a catastrophic cyberattack. The system ground to a halt on Oct. 30. [On Friday](#), the province's four health authorities were predicting that treatment delays and disruptions would begin easing on Monday, although they would persist in some emergency departments and not all elective surgeries and chemotherapy treatments would return to normal.

And this week, the province revealed that the attack was worse than previously reported. On Friday, John Hogan, the provincial justice minister, said that [employee information at three local health authorities had been stolen](#). Two days earlier, officials said that personal information of patients and health care workers, some of it health-related, had been “accessed” during the attack.

It was, in short, a cyberattack that theoretically affected everyone in the province.

But good luck finding out what happened or what's going on to remedy it. The government of Premier Andrew Furey, who is also an orthopedic surgeon, won't even describe the variety of the cyberattack.

“Our advice from world-class experts is to say nothing,” John Haggie, Newfoundland's health minister, told a news conference on Wednesday. Nor will the government reveal who those experts are that the province brought in to solve its problem.

The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, without revealing its source, reported that the shutdown was the [latest in a string of ransomware attacks](#) that have hit other health-related institutions, corporations and governments during the pandemic. Such attacks developed about a decade or so ago. The attacks, [which appear to often come out of Russia](#), simply involve seizing control of data on vulnerable computer systems, encrypting it and then threatening to destroy it unless a ransom is paid, usually in bitcoin.

Three hospitals in Ontario were victims of such attacks in October 2019. They have disrupted individuals' personal computers, and early this year they created diesel and jet fuel shortages in the United States after a pipeline company [fell victim to hackers](#).

I spoke with Nicolas Papernot, an assistant professor of computer science and computer engineering at the University of Toronto. While he is an internationally known expert on cybersecurity and privacy, he's not among Newfoundland's advisers and has no inside knowledge of its situation.

“I don't know why they don't give more information,” he said. “But they should at least give a warning to people who are potentially affected, even if they are conservative in how they estimate whether a person was or was not impacted by the leakage of information.”

The computer networks of provincial and regional health care systems in Canada are particularly susceptible to hackers because they generally contain large numbers of outdated “legacy” software systems, Professor Papernot said.

“Those tend to carry vulnerabilities that have been patched in newer systems but that can still be exploited because these systems are too old to be maintained at current security standards,” he said.

Compounding the threat has been the mass move to working from home, he added. Many governments and corporations have yet to address the security threats posed by remote access, failing to put into place additional security measures, like two-factor identification, or training employees on spotting malicious email.

Newfoundland's mess appears to be the largest disruption any health system has seen in Canada. But other governments have not been immune to major cyberattacks. Ten years ago, workers in the federal

	<p>government's department of finance and its treasury board were without internet access for months following a cyber attack.</p> <p>That same year, the Communications Security Establishment, the highly secretive eavesdropping service, was pulled out of the military and made into a separate agency. It currently operates the Canadian Centre for Cyber Security, which, among other things, looks for threats to governments and corporations in Canada and offers advice on security.</p> <p>In an email, Ryan Foreman, a spokesman for the agency, told me that it has “noticed an increase in cyber threats related to the Covid-19 pandemic, including threats directed against the country’s frontline health care and medical research facilities,” and that it has been working closely with security officials in health systems.</p> <p>The cybersecurity agency confirmed that it is providing Newfoundland with digital forensics services, data recovery and general guidance. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police, it said, is also investigating the attack.</p> <p>But what, exactly, is going on there? “We are unable to comment further on the nature of our assistance with the province due to operational security reasons,” the spokesman wrote.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/11 Council: crypto forbidden for Muslims
SOURCE	https://finance.yahoo.com/news/crypto-forbidden-muslims-indonesia-religious-090931799.html
GIST	<p>The use of crypto assets as a currency is forbidden for Muslims, according to Indonesia’s council of religious leaders.</p> <p>The National Ulema Council, or MUI, has deemed cryptocurrency as haram, or banned, as it has elements of uncertainty, wagering and harm, Asrorun Niam Sholeh, head of religious decrees, said on Thursday after the council held an expert hearing. If cryptocurrency as a commodity or digital asset can abide by Shariah tenets and can show a clear benefit, then it can be traded, he added.</p> <p>MUI holds the authority on Shariah compliance in the country that’s home to the world’s largest Muslim population, with the finance ministry and central bank consulting them on Islamic finance issues.</p> <p>The government itself has been supportive of crypto assets, allowing it to be traded alongside commodity futures as an investment option and pushing to set up a crypto-focused exchange by the end of the year. Indonesia doesn’t allow the use of crypto assets as a form of currency, as the rupiah is the only legal tender in the country.</p> <p>While the decision from MUI doesn’t mean all cryptocurrency trading will be stopped in Indonesia, the decree could deter Muslims from investing in the assets and make local institutions reconsider issuing crypto assets. Bank Indonesia has been mulling a central bank digital currency, with no decision announced as yet.</p> <p>Crypto transactions amounted to 370 trillion rupiah (\$26 billion) in the first five months of the year in Indonesia, still a fraction of the global market at around \$3 trillion.</p> <p>The stance of Indonesia’s religious leaders may diverge from their counterparts in other Muslim-majority countries. The United Arab Emirates have allowed crypto trading in Dubai’s free zone, while Bahrain have backed crypto assets since 2019.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/15 Roadside bomb in Kabul wounds 2
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/afghanistan-taliban-islamic-state-group-kabul-bf2349f534f6dcff04318606c0f8a27b
GIST	<p>KABUL (AP) — A roadside bomb blew up on a busy avenue in the Afghan capital Kabul on Monday, wounding two people, police said.</p> <p>The bomb detonated as a taxi was passing by in the Kota-e Sangi district of western Kabul. The Taliban spokesman for Kabul police, who goes by a single name Mobin, said two people were wounded. Witnesses said one was a woman in the taxi and the other a man passing by.</p> <p>There was no immediate claim of responsibility for Monday’s blast.</p> <p>The explosion came two days after a bomb exploded in a mini-bus in another district of western Kabul dominated by members of the mainly Shiite Hazara ethnic group. At least one person was killed — identified by colleagues as Hamid Sighyani, a journalist with Ariana TV — and five people wounded. The Islamic State group said in a statement late Sunday that it carried out the attack and that it was targeting Shiites.</p> <p>IS has been waging a campaign of violence in Afghanistan, targeting Taliban fighters and civilians, especially Hazaras.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/15 Narco-terrorist: the Taliban
SOURCE	https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/the-narco-terrorist-taliban/
GIST	<p>The strategic folly of US President Joe Biden’s Afghanistan policy has been laid bare in recent weeks. First, the country came back under the control of the Pakistan-reared Taliban. The announcement of the interim government's composition then dashed any remaining (naïve) hope that this Taliban regime would be different from the one the United States and its allies ousted in 2001. Beyond the cabinet including a who’s who of international terrorism, narcotics kingpins occupy senior positions.</p> <p>Afghanistan accounts for 85% of the global acreage under opium cultivation, making the Taliban the world’s largest drug cartel. It controls and taxes opioid production, oversees exports, and shields smuggling networks. This is essential to its survival. According to a recent report by the United Nations Security Council monitoring team, the production and trafficking of poppy-based and synthetic drugs remain ‘the Taliban’s largest single source of income’. So reliant is the Taliban on narcotics trafficking that its leaders have at times fought among themselves over revenue-sharing.</p> <p>The Taliban is hoping to expand its drug income as much as possible. Since its takeover, prices of opium in Afghanistan have more than tripled. In India—which is situated between the world’s two main opium-producing centres, the Pakistan–Afghanistan–Iran ‘golden crescent’ and the Myanmar–Thailand–Laos ‘golden triangle’—seizures of Afghan-origin heroin have increased. As the UN Office on Drugs and Crime warns, the economic crisis Afghanistan currently faces will only increase the appeal of illicit crop cultivation for local farmers.</p> <p>The problem extends beyond opioids. In recent years, Afghanistan has drastically expanded its production of methamphetamine. The appeal lies in the fact that meth offers producers a higher profit margin than heroin, owing to lower overhead costs and inexpensive ingredients, especially now that its chemical precursor, pseudoephedrine—a common ingredient in cold medications—is being produced locally.</p> <p>Last year, the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction warned that Afghanistan’s meth industry could soon be as large as its heroin industry. While the Taliban was not yet in control of Kabul at the time, it controlled the majority of Afghanistan’s small, clandestine meth labs.</p> <p>The Taliban uses several smuggling routes to move opiates. It moves output to Western Europe via the Caucasus and the Balkans, and from there all the way to North America. With the help of the Tajikistan-based terrorist group Jamaat Ansarullah, it also uses a northern route to Russia. The southeastern route, which</p>

snakes through Pakistan, is enabled by Pakistani [security officials](#), who cooperate with the Taliban and smuggling syndicates, known locally as ‘*tanzeems*’, in exchange for bribes.

In 2008, a Taliban drug trafficker was [recorded](#) boasting that most of his product ended up abroad. ‘Good’, he gloated. ‘May God turn all the infidels into dead corpses. Whether it is by opium or by shooting, this is our common goal.’ With the Taliban channelling profits from drug sales directly into its terror machine, the [connection](#) between Islamist violence and drug trafficking could not be starker.

This is not exclusive to the Taliban; Islamist groups like Boko Haram, al-Shabaab and al-Qaeda are also linked to drug trafficking. But not all terrorist groups are on board with this approach. As a 2020 UN Security Council [report](#) points out, the Islamic State–Khorasan—IS’s Afghan arm—opposes the drug trade.

This is one reason why the outfit is an enemy of the Taliban, despite the two groups’ longstanding personal relationships, common history of struggle and shared belief in violent Islamism. In fact, when IS-K had control of the Afghan border province of Nangarhar, it [blocked](#) the Taliban’s trafficking routes into Pakistan. The link was restored only when the US and Afghan government forces smashed the IS-K stronghold there.

This highlights the failure of the US—and the West more broadly—to recognise the complex but clear links between drug trafficking and Islamist terrorism. Had the 2001 invasion of Afghanistan been followed by a US campaign to arrest and prosecute Taliban leaders for their narcotics-trafficking activities in American courts, the group’s appeal among fundamentalist Muslims might have been severely diminished.

Such a plan was proposed in 2012. In a [240-page memo](#), the US Drug Enforcement Administration and several Justice Department officials recommended prosecuting 26 senior Taliban leaders and allied drug lords for criminal conspiracy. A [similar approach](#) worked in Colombia, and helped to force the narcotics-funded Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) to [make peace](#) with the Colombian government in 2016, after 52 years of guerrilla war.

But successive US presidents refused to use this strategy against the Taliban, which was a strategic mistake with costs that are only beginning to be revealed. By allowing the Taliban to enrich and sustain itself with drug profits during the 20-year war in Afghanistan, the US contributed to its own humiliating defeat at the hands of a narco-terrorist organisation.

It’s not too late for the US to start targeting the Taliban as a drug cartel through its federal courts. After all, Afghan-origin opioids have resulted in [high rates](#) of drug addiction and deaths around the world, from the US and Europe to Africa and Asia. And, given Afghanistan’s economic woes, the Taliban has a strong incentive to ramp up production and trafficking.

By highlighting the [nexus](#) between Islamist terrorism and the global narcotics trade, US indictments of the Taliban’s drug kingpins would help to build multilateral cooperation to crush the group’s primary source of income, such as by blocking shipments and seizing illicit profits, often parked in banks and real-estate investments abroad.

If the US does not lead an international effort to tackle Afghanistan’s opioid and meth production, the Taliban’s power—and ability to [commit atrocities](#)—will only grow and its narco-state will serve as a [haven](#) for al-Qaeda and other violent jihadist groups. As matters stand, the world can expect a major surge in international terrorism and drug overdoses in the months and years ahead.

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HEADLINE	11/15 Taliban crackdown: IS in south Afghanistan
SOURCE	https://www.dawn.com/news/1658255/taliban-launch-operation-against-is-in-southern-afghanistan
GIST	The Taliban have launched a crackdown on hideouts of militant Islamic State group in southern Afghanistan, officials said on Monday, following an increase in bloody attacks by the group in recent weeks.

The operation against [Islamic State-Khorasan](#) — the local chapter of the group — started around midnight in at least four districts of Kandahar province and continued through Monday morning, Taliban provincial police chief Abdul Ghafar Mohammadi told *AFP*.

“So far, four Daesh (IS) fighters have been killed and ten arrested... one of them blew himself up inside a house,” he said.

A member of the Taliban intelligence agency who declined to be named told *AFP* at least three civilians were killed in the operation.

Local media quoted a Taliban official as saying there had also been a blast in a western suburb of Kabul Monday morning with no casualties.

In the three months since the [Taliban came to power](#), IS-K has been active in Jalalabad, Kunduz, Kandahar and Kabul.

Last month the group claimed responsibility for a suicide [bomb attack on a Shia mosque](#) in Kandahar that killed at least 60 people and injured scores more.

That attack came a week after another [deadly mosque blast](#) claimed by IS-K in northern Kunduz province killed more than 60 people.

The group on Sunday claimed responsibility for a bomb that [destroyed](#) a minibus in Kabul at the weekend killing a well-known local journalist and up to two others.

Earlier this month IS-K fighters raided the city's [National Military Hospital](#), killing at least 19 people and injuring more than 50 others.

The group has also claimed several attacks in the city of Jalalabad, the capital of eastern Nangarhar province and a hotbed of IS-K activity.

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HEADLINE	11/12 Extremist platform migration, adaption
SOURCE	https://gnet-research.org/2021/11/12/remaining-and-expanding-or-surviving-and-adapting-extremist-platform-migration-and-adaptation-strategies/
GIST	<p>Despite the often-decentralised nature of extremists and violent extremists in online spaces, there is clear evidence that they attempt to coordinate platform migration and provide instructional manuals on how fellow sympathisers should maintain operational security measures as they branch out onto other applications.</p> <p>Encountering new platforms naturally comes with a learning curve which translates to the risk of making potential mistakes if a user is unfamiliar with the security protocols and user terms of the platform. To reduce op-sec errors, users share messages containing security tips, create graphics addressing potential pitfalls of various platforms, and post lengthy guidelines on how to safely set up accounts on other apps via instructional PDFs, articles, and videos. Additionally, the wide array of available messaging apps has resulted in extremists simultaneously gravitating towards multiple platforms with varying objectives intended for specific apps.</p> <p>Perhaps the clearest examples of such activities come from Islamic State supporters – although there have been recent instances of extreme right, white supremacist, and conspiracy milieus utilising similar strategies. This article will primarily focus on IS supporters’ online activities as a case study but will also touch on the extreme right and white supremacists.</p> <p>Islamic State Supporters</p>

In November 2019, Europol [initiated](#) its [most successful](#) crackdown on pro-IS Telegram ecosystems resulting in further decentralisation of pro-IS communities onto more obscure apps. Regarding the Europol campaign, a mass data report by Amarnath Amarasingam, Shiraz Maher, and Charlie Winter “demonstrates the hugely debilitating impact of the 2019 Action Days” which “represented a serious, sustained, and existential threat to both the group [Islamic State] and its supporters.” Before the crackdown [since 2015](#), Telegram had remained IS supporters’ platform of choice due to its encryption capabilities, file sharing abilities, overall user-friendly structure, and absence of content moderation encountered on other social media sites such as Twitter and Facebook. However, following the crackdown, supporters dispersed onto more niche spaces while also displaying continued dedication towards maintaining a presence on Telegram. As [Michael Krona observes](#), “...the strategy of originating from one central hub (Telegram) for uploading content and then via invites and links directing users from other platforms...has been substituted by a more decentralised structure spanning over a large number of platforms.”

Although decentralised communication characterises this semi-vague grass-roots coordination, established collectives dedicated to online security provide multi-lingual resources trusted by wider pro-IS communities. Electronic Horizons Foundation, a group [created](#) to spread [“security and technical awareness”](#), provides downloadable extensive step-by-step guides accompanied with visual instructions. In order to demonstrate the vast comprehensive nature of the guides, a list of thirty EHF Arabic, English, and French resources I archived in 2020 from EHF’s website (which is no longer up) are listed below:

- AF-WALL
- Basic Protection in IOS System
- Conversations
- Data Collection Techniques
- EDS
- Encrypting files on Android
- Explanation of Exiftool to Delete File Metadata in Windows Operating System
- Gajim
- General Application Permissions
- Google Play system
- I2P
- KeyLogger
- Lineage
- NVISO
- Ooniprobe
- OS Debian
- Pidgin
- Riot App
- Scan Suspicious Links
- Signal
- Sudo
- Talkatone
- Telegram
- Threema
- Twitter security settings
- Ultimate Guide of TOR
- VeraCrypt Program
- VPN Services for Android
- WhatsApp
- Zom

The multi-lingual focus on IOS/Android guidelines, TOR browsers, file encryption, and data collection techniques (presumed on the part of IS supporters to be used by intelligence agencies) *in addition to* instructions on how to create new accounts demonstrate an all-encompassing attention to security protocols. Amidst this more organised dissemination of material, informal discussion between IS

supporters on the strengths and weaknesses of platforms continues – these conversations were particularly prominent following the 2019 Europol initiative...

As demonstrated in the above screenshot from a private IS chatroom, users will employ layered security measures and the ability to access an application via TOR, for example, adds to the appeal of a platform. In addition to security guidance, pro-IS networks have an increased emphasis on staying connected amidst continuing waves of account bans and avoiding platforms they view as problematic. Methods of connecting users and discouraging usage of certain apps include:

- Using Telegram and RocketChat as information hubs to distribute instructions/advice on which applications to use and avoid [Hoop particularly received negative reactions but, as noted by [Suraj Ganesan](#), there is a continuing noticeable presence of South Asia-focused channels still operating on the platform. IS Hoop channels also frequently cross-post Telegram links/bots/usernames as well as justpasteit and other file-sharing urls.].
- Providing the contact information for a single user across multiple apps who will then assist newcomers in connecting with various pro-IS spaces.
- Sharing generic IS content links to chatrooms and channels across platforms.
- In anticipation of bans, creating multiple backup accounts and sharing this information internally with trusted ‘brothers’.
- Creating nondescript (as in not overtly pro-IS) bots solely dedicated to link-posting.
- Switching between apps where one (ex. Telegram) is for generic conversation and the other (ex. Threema) is used to discuss more sensitive topics.

Another method includes switching to encrypted chat mode on Telegram and setting a self-destruct timer for the chat log.

- Creating different usernames for each platform in order to make it more difficult to track and individual across platforms – the downside of this tactic is that it also makes it harder for sympathisers to find each other across apps since they will not recognise the username unless they have previously shared it with one another.

Others prefer to keep the same username because of this potential hurdle.

Beyond attention to security protocols, efforts by users to maintain connections across platforms, and preserve continuing circulation of propaganda, younger pro-IS supporters are creating subcultures centred on memes and aesthetics oftentimes associated with the alt-Right. Moustafa Ayad and his team [note](#) the purpose of such an approach, “Since the loss of the Islamic State’s physical caliphate two years ago, ISIS supporters have been grappling with their diminished relevance online, reinventing their propaganda through a range of bizarre strategies from pornographic ultraviolence to meme-based shitposting.”

TikTok, an app that tends to draw in younger demographics, contains ecosystems of pro-IS content that remain undetected by moderators. After following a handful of overtly pro-IS accounts, the algorithm began directing me towards similar accounts with well-known IS members, IS flags, and still images from propaganda videos set as their profile photos. IS TikTok users create shitposts that are reminiscent of the alt-Right vibes described by Ayad. They also post ISISwave aesthetics, autotuned anashid, and short clips of official IS propaganda among other types of messaging. Notably, the comment sections of these TikTok videos contain direct links to pro-IS Telegram where supporters intend to reconnect and directly converse in a more private manner as opposed to commenting back and forth in the TikTok conversation thread. Some accounts maintain public profiles with innocuous hashtags such as #islam and #قط (cat) while others remain private.

More recently, online IS supporters drew some attention when they established a presence on GETTR displaying an openness to, as [Chelsea Daymon](#) explains, “trying any platform and seeing how friendly it is to them.” In addition to the nature of trolling a conservative app, there is a strategic advantage in exploiting a platform that is encountering [“difficulties in balancing its free speech ethos with growing demands to stop terrorist-related material...”](#)

Apps such as Telegram, Element, and RocketChat often gravitate towards [closed ecosystem](#) structures unavailable to a general public while TikTok and Instagram serve the purpose of developing visual-based aesthetic themes. Large pockets of supporters continue to exist on larger platforms such as Twitter and Facebook but alternative apps with encryption capabilities remain a safer choice in terms of account longevity.

However there is a downside to placing emphasis on alt apps due to decreased accessibility to general audiences. Reliance on closed echo chambers limits opportunities for public outreach and the distribution of propaganda messages to wider audiences *beyond* supporter networks. Nico Prucha [documented](#) a pro-ISIS media source, *al-Wafa*, which published a statement cautioning about the “strategic error” of limiting online activities to Telegram. It directed supporters to “return to Twitter and Facebook, for our missionary operations have greater reach on these platforms. Those we intend to influence are not on Telegram...” In another example, a six-page statement from the unofficial Al-Azm Media Foundation titled “The Mobile Bomb” made rounds on Telegram with translations in both Arabic and English. Echoing the concerns presented in *al-Wafa*, it complained about supporters operating within the comfort zone of Telegram but went further in directly deriding supporters for their “laziness.” It also advised supporters to “make Telegram as a platform to prepare and a bridge to cross over to Twitter and Facebook” and not “make it [Telegram] a prison for yourself and your skills.” Notably before the Europol campaign, bots and channels, including the well-recognised “Bank al Ansar,” focused on disseminating hacked Twitter/Facebook/phone number accounts for IS supporters to use.

In summary, apps serve a wide variety of purposes and their significance to IS supporters is determined by decentralised informal community consensus in combination with ambiguous guidance from semi-centralised collectives like the Electronic Horizons Foundation. Nonetheless, the wider concerns of these various pro-IS communities distinctly coalesce around a set of prominent concerns: security, connectivity, and a continued output of both official and unofficial propaganda. Even through waves of deplatforming, striking a balance between *remaining* on the familiarly comfortable closed apps versus *expanding* outreach to a wider public continues to be a point of tension for the [‘virtual Caliphate.’](#)

On a final note, despite this article’s focus on virtual pro-IS spaces, taking into account how on the ground realities in combination with online anti-terrorism campaigns (such as Europol’s November 2019 campaign) affect official propaganda online outputs provide crucial insights on the intertwining nature between virtual realities and the ‘real’ world. For further reference, see [“Censoring Extremism: Influence of Online Restriction on Official Media Products of ISIS”](#) by Kayla McMinimy, Carol Winker, Ayse Lokmanoglu and Monerah Almahmoud.

Brief Observations on the Extreme Right and White Supremacist Online Spaces

Extreme right and white supremacist supporters do not face the same level of restrictions and deplatforming efforts as pro-IS supporters. That being said, Maura Conway succinctly explains the limitations of such comparisons which can be referenced [here](#). Shifting focus towards cross-platform behavioural patterns, a *brief* inclusion of how these communities respond to moderation efforts and instruct their own adherents on online safety measures offers some preliminary insights concerning improvisation and adaption by extremists beyond IS.

Following the 6 January 2021 Capitol insurrection, the suspension of former President Donald Trump’s Twitter, and the Amazon/Apple/Google [removal](#) of Parler, a lesser-known app called [MeWe](#) and [Telegram](#) experienced a surge in downloads from the Apple Store. In anticipation of new users, extreme Right and white supremacist Telegram spaces circulated op-sec guides with screenshot instructions on how to switch to the most secure settings. They also encouraged users to create accounts with fake numbers, avoid using real profile photos, and exercise caution in chats. In late 2018, I had encountered what appeared to be surprisingly frequent instances of people using selfies as profile photos and having phone numbers displayed on their account while observing these Telegram spaces. Now, however, I rarely see this and although these observations are anecdotal, privacy and security are clearly priorities for these communities.

As demonstrated below, security guidance does not need to reach the level of sophistication employed by pro-IS networks to be instructive. Note the 39.2K view count for the “Security Alert” message which received wide circulation...

As in the case of pro-IS supporters, extreme Right and white supremacist accounts will also cross-post links from a variety of platforms, attempt to establish themselves on multiple apps, and express distrust of apps that they view as insecure or unstable due to policy guidelines and data storage. This topic merits further discussion and examination but this quick overview of some of the tactics hopefully provides an introductory overview.

Conclusion

Regardless of ideology, extremists’ ability to, and effectiveness in, maintaining an online presence relies on certain levels of flexibility and creativity. Factors such as the presence or lack of an official terrorist group designation, individual platform policies/deplatforming efforts, desires for anonymity, and users’ own levels of direct engagement in these spaces (among other factors) influence online behavioural patterns. Extremists coordinate across platforms to maintain webs of complex ecosystems and they even create spaces where [exchanges occur across ideological boundaries](#). Researchers, practitioners, and policymakers must continue their wide-net observational approaches to note rhetorical, narrative, and platform migration shifts developing from within extremist milieus. Finally, proposed key takeaways include:

- Different platforms often hold distinct separate appeals for extremists for a variety of reasons including encryption capabilities, levels of content moderation, user-friendliness, and file sharing capabilities.
- Open vs. closed online ecosystems each contain their strengths and weaknesses which extremists must take into account.
- Cross-platform link-sharing and platform migration patterns can represent shifting phenomenon giving further insight into push/pull factors raised in the first point.
- Virtual extremist ecosystems are characterised by interconnectivity and cross-pollination of content from one platform to the next.
- Users employ layered security measures (ex: accessing websites via TOR).
- Maintaining an online presence is viewed as a victory.
- Sub-ideologies within a general extremist ideological umbrella may maintain their own distinct niche spaces.
- Advice such as online security tips and branching out onto new platforms can occur at decentralised organic levels while in other cases, it may come from more centralised nodes (collectives with unofficial media ‘brands’ like the Electronic Horizons Foundation, prominent accounts recognised in the community, reposts of general messages/graphics or informal conversations among anonymous users).

The nature of decentralised extremist ecosystems allows for fringe development of cross-ideological zones that will allow white supremacists and Salafi-jihadists to exist in shared spaces for example.

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Click on source link to view referenced screenshots

HEADLINE	11/14 UK: taxi explodes outside hospital; arrests
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/14/world/europe/liverpool-hospital-car-explosion.html
GIST	<p>Three men were arrested under Britain’s Terrorism Act after a taxi exploded outside a hospital in Liverpool, England, on Sunday morning, killing one person and injuring another, the authorities said.</p> <p>The cause of the explosion was not immediately clear. About eight hours after it was reported, the authorities announced that three men, aged 21, 26 and 29, had been arrested in the Kensington area of Liverpool. Their names were not immediately released.</p> <p>Counter Terrorism Policing North West, part of a national alliance of police forces, said it was leading the investigation with support from the Merseyside Police in Liverpool.</p>

At about 11 a.m. local time, the police responded to reports that a taxi had pulled up outside Liverpool Women's Hospital and exploded, the Merseyside Police [said in a statement](#).

"Work is still ongoing to establish what has happened and could take some time before we're in a position to confirm anything," Chief Constable Serena Kennedy of the Merseyside Police [told reporters](#) on Sunday. Ms. Kennedy said the authorities were "keeping an open mind" as they investigated.

Given the circumstances of how the explosion occurred, she added, Britain's Counter Terrorism Policing would lead the investigation. Britain's home secretary, Priti Patel, [said on Twitter](#) that she was receiving regular updates "on the awful incident at Liverpool Women's Hospital."

In an update on Sunday night, the Greater Manchester Police said a "large cordon" had been placed on Rutland Avenue in Liverpool, about a mile and a half from the hospital, and that a few homes had been evacuated as a precaution. The evacuation was part of an investigation into the explosion, the police said on [Twitter](#).

It was unclear whether any of the three men who had been arrested lived on Rutland Avenue. Information about the person who was killed in the explosion was not immediately available.

A second victim, a man, was hospitalized with injuries that the authorities said were not life-threatening. Phil Garrigan, the chief fire officer of the Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service, told reporters on Sunday that the man "had left the vehicle prior to the fire developing to the extent that it did."

The fire from the explosion was extinguished quickly, Chief Garrigan said.

Access to the hospital, the authorities said, would be restricted "until further notice," and some patients were diverted to other hospitals. Ambulances were still being allowed access to the hospital for emergencies, and staff members were being escorted into and out of the building by the authorities.

The mayor of Liverpool, Joanne Anderson, said in a [statement](#) that "the incident at the Liverpool Women's Hospital is unsettling and upsetting and my thoughts are with those affected."

In a [statement](#) on Sunday night, Ms. Kennedy said that investigators were still asking for information and that there would be "an increased and visible police presence on the streets of Merseyside."

"It is also important," she said, "that, at this very early stage, people do not speculate about what has happened."

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HEADLINE	11/14 Burkina Faso: extremist attack kills 20
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/extremist-attack-burkina-faso-kills-20-81167573
GIST	<p>OUAGADOUGOU, Burkina Faso -- An attack by jihadis on a gendarme post in northern Burkina Faso killed at least 19 officers and one civilian Sunday, the ministry of security said.</p> <p>The attack took place in Inata town in Soum province, near Burkina Faso's border with Mali, Minister of Security Maxime Kone said on state television.</p> <p>The post "faced a cowardly and barbaric attack, an attack during which our forces, with a lot of dignity and devotion kept their position during the fighting," he said.</p> <p>Kone told The Associated Press via text message that the death toll was "provisional" and likely to rise. A soldier, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not permitted to speak to the media, said a military helicopter flying overhead had seen a lot of bodies.</p>

The attack is the latest in a series of violent incidents across the conflict-riddled nation, which has been overrun by jihadi groups linked to al-Qaida and the Islamic State for more than five years. Violence by the groups has killed thousands and displaced more than 1.4 million people.

Soum province, one of the epicenters of the violence, has seen an uptick in fighting in recent weeks after months of relative calm, due to negotiations between the national security service and some jihadi groups surrounding last year's presidential election.

But since October, explosives have been found outside the main town of Djibo and there has been a resurgence of irregular jihadi checkpoints who force people to show identification and sometimes kidnap them, according to a local government official who spoke on condition of anonymity because he feared for his safety.

The latest attack was a significant blow because the gendarme detachment in Inata was the only one that stood its ground for two years while troops at surrounding bases retreated when jihadi violence escalated, said Heni Nsaibia, senior researcher at the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project.

"Unfortunately this two-year stand may today have come to an end, unless measures are taken. I think these regular large-scale attacks which take place on a weekly basis are indicative of the uphill battle that the Burkinabes are facing to effectively regain ground and stabilize a very fragile security situation," he said.

According to a widely circulated internal military report from Nov. 12, the detachment in Inata had been out of supplies for two weeks and nearly starved, surviving by killing animals around the base.

Ill-equipped and undertrained security forces are struggling to stem the violence. Last week in the Sahel's Seno province, Goudoubou refugee camp, which housed some 13,000 Malians, was forced to close after a series of security breaches, according to the U.N. An internal U.N. document discussing the security situation in the Sahel and seen by AP, said that despite the security forces "best efforts" they have not been able to secure the area and are unlikely to moving forward.

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HEADLINE	11/13 Kabul: bomb blast Afghan bus
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/blast-bus-afghan-capital-kills-person-wounds-81149776
GIST	<p>KABUL -- A bomb exploded on a mini-bus Saturday on a busy commercial street in a Kabul neighborhood mainly populated by members of Afghanistan's minority Hazara community, emergency workers and the bus driver said. At least one person was killed and five wounded.</p> <p>Workers with the ambulance teams at the scene told The Associated Press that the blast appeared to have been caused by a bomb on the bus.</p> <p>The bus driver, speaking to the AP at the hospital, said that at one point during his route, a suspicious man got onto the bus and a few minutes later, the explosion went off at the back of the bus.</p> <p>The driver, who goes by a single name Murtaza, said he saw two passengers with their clothes on fire falling out of the back of the vehicle while other passengers escaped out the front.</p> <p>The spokesman for Afghanistan's ruling Taliban, Zabihullah Mujahid, told the AP that a fire broke out on the mini-bus and caused an explosion, killing one person and wounding another.</p> <p>Photos from the scene showed the burning wreckage of a vehicle with a pall of smoke rising into the air. The explosion took place on the main avenue running through Dashti Barchi, a sprawling neighborhood on the west side of Kabul largely populated by Hazaras.</p>

	Afghanistan's Hazaras, who are mostly Shiite Muslims, have been the target of a brutal campaign of violence for the past several years, blamed on the Islamic State group. Militants have carried out several deadly attacks in Dashti Barchi, including a 2020 attack on a maternity hospital.
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HEADLINE	11/13 IS-linked group kills Nigeria general
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/linked-group-kills-nigerian-general-destroys-buildings-81151627
GIST	<p>LAGOS, Nigeria -- An Islamic State-linked extremist group blamed for killing thousands in Nigeria and neighboring West African countries has killed four members of the Nigerian army, including a general, the army said Saturday.</p> <p>The Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP) killed the security personnel during an attack in the Askira Uba area of Borno state, where a war against a rebel insurgency has been centered for more than a decade.</p> <p>A Nigerian army spokesperson said its troops killed “several” ISWAP members in response to the attack, which residents told The Associated Press had also targeted a military base and unfolded over three days.</p> <p>Hassan Chibok, a community leader in the neighboring Chibok council, said a classroom building and other structures were destroyed by the extremist insurgents.</p> <p>“The primary school (in Askira Uba) was burned down. The primary healthcare center was also burned down, and the house of the village head,” he said.</p> <p>“In the fierce encounter, which is still raging at the time of filing this report, troops supported by the air component of OPHK (Operation HADIN KAI, the code name for the military operation in the northeast) have destroyed five A-Jet, two A-29, two dragon combat vehicles and nine gun trucks,” the army's spokesperson, Brigadier General Onyema Nwachukwu, said in a statement.</p> <p>The development is yet another sign that the IS-linked group remains a threat in the northeastern part of Africa’s most populous country despite the Nigerian military’s repeated claims of successes in the war against insurgency especially after ISWAP lost two leaders in the last few months.</p> <p>ISWAP split from Boko Haram in 2016. The rival extremist groups remain united in an insurgency against the Nigerian government that has expanded to neighboring Niger, Chad and Cameroon.</p> <p>Militants in the IS-linked group have sought to consolidate their position in the Lake Chad basin and northeast Nigeria following the death of Boko Haram leader Abubakar Shekau.</p> <p>Despite losing two of its leaders - Abu Musab al-Barnawi and successor Malam Bako — in the last few months, ISWAP continues to target the Nigerian military and those who aid soldiers.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/13 US hid airstrike; dozens civilians killed
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/13/us/us-airstrikes-civilian-deaths.html
GIST	<p>In the last days of the battle against the Islamic State in Syria, when members of the once-fierce caliphate were cornered in a dirt field next to a town called Baghuz, a U.S. military drone circled high overhead, hunting for military targets. But it saw only a large crowd of women and children huddled against a river bank.</p> <p>Without warning, an American F-15E attack jet streaked across the drone’s high-definition field of vision and dropped a 500-pound bomb on the crowd, swallowing it in a shuddering blast. As the smoke cleared, a few people stumbled away in search of cover. Then a jet tracking them dropped one 2,000-pound bomb, then another, killing most of the survivors.</p>

It was March 18, 2019. At the U.S. military's busy Combined Air Operations Center at Al Udeid Air Base in Qatar, uniformed personnel watching the live drone footage looked on in stunned disbelief, according to one officer who was there.

"Who dropped that?" a confused analyst typed on a secure chat system being used by those monitoring the drone, two people who reviewed the chat log recalled. Another responded, "We just dropped on 50 women and children."

An initial battle damage assessment quickly found that the number of dead was actually about 70.

The Baghuz strike was one of the largest civilian casualty incidents of the war against the Islamic State, but it has never been publicly acknowledged by the U.S. military. The details, reported here for the first time, show that the death toll was almost immediately apparent to military officials. A legal officer flagged the strike as a possible war crime that required an investigation. But at nearly every step, the military made moves that concealed the catastrophic strike. The death toll was downplayed. Reports were delayed, sanitized and classified. United States-led coalition forces bulldozed the blast site. And top leaders were not notified.

The Defense Department's independent inspector general began an inquiry, but the report containing its findings was stalled and stripped of any mention of the strike.

"Leadership just seemed so set on burying this. No one wanted anything to do with it," said Gene Tate, an evaluator who worked on the case for the inspector general's office and agreed to discuss the aspects that were not classified. "It makes you lose faith in the system when people are trying to do what's right but no one in positions of leadership wants to hear it."

Mr. Tate, a former Navy officer who had worked for years as a civilian analyst with the Defense Intelligence Agency and the National Counterterrorism Center before moving to the inspector general's office, said he criticized the lack of action and was eventually forced out of his job.

The details of the strikes were pieced together by The New York Times over months from confidential documents and descriptions of classified reports, as well as interviews with personnel directly involved, and officials with top secret security clearances who discussed the incident on the condition that they not be named.

The Times investigation found that the bombing had been called in by a classified American special operations unit, Task Force 9, which was in charge of ground operations in Syria. The task force operated in such secrecy that at times it did not inform even its own military partners of its actions. In the case of the Baghuz bombing, the American Air Force command in Qatar had no idea the strike was coming, an officer who served at the command center said.

In the minutes after the strike, an alarmed Air Force intelligence officer in the operations center called over an Air Force lawyer in charge of determining the legality of strikes. The lawyer ordered the F-15E squadron and the drone crew to preserve all video and other evidence, according to documents obtained by The Times. He went upstairs and reported the strike to his chain of command, saying it was a possible violation of the law of armed conflict — a war crime — and regulations required a thorough, independent investigation.

But a thorough, independent investigation never happened.

This week, after The New York Times sent its findings to U.S. Central Command, which oversaw the air war in Syria, the command acknowledged the strikes for the first time, saying 80 people were killed but the airstrikes were justified. It said the bombs killed 16 fighters and four civilians. As for the other 60 people killed, the statement said it was not clear that they were civilians, in part because women and children in the Islamic State sometimes took up arms.

“We abhor the loss of innocent life and take all possible measures to prevent them,” Capt. Bill Urban, the chief spokesman for the command, said in the statement. “In this case, we self-reported and investigated the strike according to our own evidence and take full responsibility for the unintended loss of life.”

The only assessment done immediately after the strike was performed by the same ground unit that ordered the strike. It determined that the bombing was lawful because it killed only a small number of civilians while targeting Islamic State fighters in an attempt to protect coalition forces, the command said. Therefore no formal war crime notification, criminal investigation or disciplinary action was warranted, it said, adding that the other deaths were accidental.

But the Air Force lawyer, Lt. Col. Dean W. Korsak, believed he had witnessed possible war crimes and repeatedly pressed his leadership and Air Force criminal investigators to act. When they did not, he alerted the Defense Department’s independent inspector general. Two years after the strike, seeing no evidence that the watchdog agency was taking action, Colonel Korsak emailed the Senate Armed Services Committee, telling its staff that he had top secret material to discuss and adding, “I’m putting myself at great risk of military retaliation for sending this.”

“Senior ranking U.S. military officials intentionally and systematically circumvented the deliberate strike process,” he wrote in the email, which was obtained by The Times. Much of the material was classified and would need to be discussed through secure communications, he said. He wrote that a unit had intentionally entered false strike log entries, “clearly seeking to cover up the incidents.” Calling the classified death toll “shockingly high,” he said the military did not follow its own requirements to report and investigate the strike.

There was a good chance, he wrote, that “the highest levels of government remained unaware of what was happening on the ground.”

Colonel Korsak did not respond to requests for comment.

Undercounted Tolls

The United States portrayed the air war against the Islamic State as the most precise and humane bombing campaign in its history. The military said every report of civilian casualties was investigated and the findings reported publicly, creating what the military called a model of accountability.

But the strikes on Baghuz tell a different story.

The details suggest that while the military put strict rules in place to protect civilians, the Special Operations task force repeatedly used other rules to skirt them. The military teams counting casualties rarely had the time, resources or incentive to do accurate work. And troops rarely faced repercussions when they caused civilian deaths.

Even in the extraordinary case of Baghuz — which would rank third on the military’s worst civilian casualty events in Syria if 64 civilian deaths were acknowledged — regulations for reporting and investigating the potential crime were not followed, and no one was held accountable.

The military recently admitted that a [botched strike](#) in Kabul, Afghanistan, in August killed 10 civilians, including seven children. But that kind of public reckoning is unusual, observers say. More often, civilian deaths are undercounted even in classified reports. Nearly 1,000 strikes hit targets in Syria and Iraq in 2019, using 4,729 bombs and missiles. The [official military tally](#) of civilian dead for that entire year is only 22, and the strikes from March 18 are nowhere on the list.

A Secret Task Force

The battle at Baghuz represented the end of a nearly five-year United States-led campaign to defeat the Islamic State in Syria and was a foreign policy triumph for President Donald J. Trump.

At the height of its rule in 2014, the Islamic State controlled an area of Syria and Iraq about the size of Tennessee. A fleet of coalition drones, jets, attack helicopters and heavy bombers hit enemy positions with about 35,000 strikes over the next five years, plowing a path for local Kurdish and Arab militias to reclaim ground.

At the end of the grinding fight, airstrikes corralled the last Islamic State fighters in a scrap of farmland against the Euphrates River near Baghuz. Coalition air power forced thousands to surrender, sparing the lives of untold numbers of Kurdish and Arab allies.

On the ground, Task Force 9 coordinated offensives and airstrikes. The unit included soldiers from the 5th Special Forces Group and the Army's elite commando team Delta Force, several officials said.

Over time, some officials overseeing the air campaign began to believe that the task force was systematically circumventing the safeguards created to limit civilian deaths.

The process was supposed to run through several checks and balances. Drones with high-definition cameras studied potential targets, sometimes for days or weeks. Analysts pored over intelligence data to differentiate combatants from civilians. And military lawyers were embedded with strike teams to ensure that targeting complied with the law of armed conflict. In combat situations, the process might take only minutes, but even then the rules required teams to identify military targets and minimize civilian harm. At times, when the task force failed to meet those requirements, commanders in Qatar and elsewhere denied permission to strike.

But there was a quick and easy way to skip much of that oversight: claiming imminent danger.

The law of armed conflict — the rule book that lays out the military's legal conduct in war — allows troops in life-threatening situations to sidestep the strike team lawyers, analysts and other bureaucracy and call in strikes directly from aircraft under what military regulations call an "inherent right of self-defense."

Task Force 9 typically played only an advisory role in Syria, and its soldiers were usually well behind the front lines. Even so, by late 2018, about 80 percent of all airstrikes it was calling in claimed self-defense, according to an Air Force officer who reviewed the strikes.

The rules allowed U.S. troops and local allies to invoke it when facing not just direct enemy fire, but anyone displaying "hostile intent," according to a former officer who deployed with the unit numerous times. Under that definition, something as mundane as a car driving miles from friendly forces could in some cases be targeted. The task force interpreted the rules broadly, the former officer said.

The [aftermath of that approach was plain to see](#). A number of Syrian towns, including the [regional capital, Raqqa](#), were reduced to [little more than rubble](#). Human rights organizations reported that the coalition caused [thousands](#) of civilian deaths during the war. Hundreds of military assessment reports examined by The Times show the task force was implicated in nearly one in five coalition civilian casualty incidents in the region.

Publicly, the coalition insisted the numbers were much lower. Privately, it became overwhelmed by the volume of civilian casualty claims reported by locals, humanitarian groups and the news media, and a backlog of civilian casualty assessment reports sat unexamined for months, two people who compiled the reports said.

But even when completed, the military teams making those assessments were not equipped to make an accurate count, the former task force officer said, because the personnel doing the counting did not investigate on the ground and often based their findings on how many dead civilians they could definitively identify from aerial footage of the rubble.

Mr. Tate, who wrote [a classified report](#) on the shortcomings of the process, said the assessment teams at times lacked training and some did not have security clearances to even view the evidence.

The assessments of the strike process were also flawed, three officials said, because they were done by the units that called in the strikes, meaning the task force was grading its own performance. Rarely did it find problems.

Alarm at the C.I.A.

Human rights groups were not the only ones sounding the alarm. C.I.A. officers working in Syria grew so alarmed over the task force's strikes that agents reported their concern to the Department of Defense inspector general, which investigated the claims and produced a report. The [results of that report are top secret](#), but the former task force officer, who reviewed the report, said the C.I.A. officers alleged that in about 10 incidents, the secretive task force hit targets knowing civilians would be killed.

The former officer said the report determined that all the strikes were legal.

The inspector general declined to release the report or discuss its findings.

Staff in the operations center in Qatar, who oversaw the air war, also became concerned with task force strikes. Air Force lawyers started keeping a spreadsheet, recording the self-defense justifications the task force used to call strikes, then comparing them with drone footage and other evidence, according to one officer who viewed the data. The evidence appeared to show that the task force was adding details that would legally justify a strike, such as seeing a man with a gun, even when those details were not visible in the footage.

Though a number of officers in the operations center suspected that the task force was including misleading information in the logs to justify strikes, they did not feel they had enough evidence to press the issue, the officer said. That changed on March 18, 2019.

A Fatal Strike

The camp at Baghuz was effectively the Islamic State's Alamo — a last stand where hard-core militants vowed to fight to the death. For more than a month, they had been trapped in one square mile of burned-over farm fields. Among the makeshift tents, bullet-pocked vehicles and hand-dug bunkers were tens of thousands of women and children. Some were there willingly; some were not.

The coalition had laid siege, hoping to starve the fighters out. In six weeks, 29,000 people, most of them women and children, surrendered. On March 18, drone footage showed the camp still harbored large numbers of people suspected of being fighters and their families.

Coalition drones had scoured the camp 24 hours a day for weeks and knew nearly every inch, officers said, including the daily movements of groups of women and children who gathered to eat, pray and sleep near a steep river bank that provided cover.

What happened on the morning of March 18 is in dispute.

That day Islamic State fighters trapped in the camp launched a predawn counteroffensive, according to Central Command, which oversaw Task Force 9. It said hundreds of Islamic State fighters started firing rifles and grenade launchers and sending forward fighters with suicide vests. The coalition pummeled the fighters with airstrikes — so many that by midmorning the coalition had used all the missiles on its drones. Only one American drone, controlled by the task force, was left in the area, and it was unarmed.

At about 10 a.m., local Syrian forces reported they were under fire and in danger of being overrun, and called for an airstrike, Central Command said. The task force drone tracked a group of fighters as they made their way through the camp to the area where the women and children sheltered.

A 5th Special Forces Group officer in the task force looked at the drone footage and didn't see any civilians, a task force officer said. But the drone he relied on had only a standard-definition camera.

Central Command said there were no high-definition drones in the area that could get a better view of the target.

The Special Forces officer gave the order to fire. With no precision missiles left, the command said, the ground commander called in 500- and 2,000-pound bombs. The strike log classified the strike as self-defense.

In fact, a high-definition drone was available. The task force did not use it. Circling above, it was streaming footage of the same patch of ground to the operations center in Qatar. Because the task force operated at a high level of secrecy, two officers said, the people in Qatar watching the high-definition drone were not aware the task force was about to call in a strike.

Central Command said the task force did not know that the better drone was overhead.

The high-definition drone recorded a very different scene from what was described by Central Command this past week, three people who viewed the footage said. In it, two or three men — not 16 — wander through the frame near the crowd. They have rifles but do not appear to be maneuvering, engaging coalition forces or acting in a way that would seem to justify a self-defense strike with 2,000-pound bombs. A chat log used by analysts who were watching the footage noted the presence of women, children and a man with a gun, but did not mention any active combat, two people who viewed the log said.

The [Visual Investigations](#) team at The Times reviewed hundreds of photos, videos and satellite images of the Islamic State camp in Baghuz. The reported strike point lies between two aqueducts, which the team used as reference features to pinpoint the location.

A photograph taken the previous day shows several makeshift tents in the area.

What is not in dispute is that moments after the task force called in the strike, an F-15E attack plane hit the spot with a 500-pound bomb. Five minutes later, when ground forces saw people fleeing the blast site, the F-15E dropped two 2,000-pound bombs on the survivors. The entire attack took 12 minutes.

A Syrian videographer, [Gihad Darwish](#), captured airstrikes in the area matching that description as he filmed from a rocky bluff above the camp. The footage shows that ground troops may not have been able to see the group of civilians.

A Failed Investigation

Defense Department regulations require any “possible, suspected or alleged” violation of the law of armed conflict to be reported immediately to the combatant commander in charge, as well as criminal investigators, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the secretary of defense and the secretary of the Army.

After viewing the footage, the Air Force lawyer, Colonel Korsak, ordered the units involved to preserve nine pieces of evidence, including video, and reported the strike to his chain of command, according to the email he later sent to the Senate Armed Services Committee staff. He also notified the command of concerns that the unit appeared to be covering up the alleged war crimes violations by adding details to the strike log that would justify a self-defense strike.

He told the committee staff that commanders did not take action.

Coalition forces overran the camp that day and defeated the Islamic State a few days later. The yearslong air war was hailed as a triumph. The commander of the operations center in Qatar authorized all personnel to have four drinks at the base bar, lifting the normal three-drink limit.

Civilian observers who came to the area of the strike the next day found piles of dead women and children. The human rights organization Raqqa Is Being Slaughtered Silently [posted photos](#) of the bodies, calling it a “terrible massacre.”

Satellite images from four days later show the sheltered bank and area around it, which were in the control of the coalition, appeared to have been bulldozed.

David Eubank, a former U.S. Army Special Forces soldier who now runs the humanitarian organization [Free Burma Rangers](#), walked through the area about a week later. “The place had been pulverized by airstrikes,” he said in an interview. “There was a lot of freshly bulldozed earth and the stink of bodies underneath, a lot of bodies.”

Concerned that details of the airstrike would be buried as well, Colonel Korsak alerted the Air Force’s version of the F.B.I., the Office of Special Investigations. In an email Colonel Korsak shared with the Senate Armed Services Committee, a major responded that agents probably would not look into it, saying the office typically investigated civilian casualty reports only when there was “potential for high media attention, concern with outcry from local community/government, concern sensitive images may get out.”

The Air Force Office of Special Investigations declined to comment.

Colonel Korsak again pressed his chain of command to act, informing his command’s chief legal officer in a memo in May 2019 that regulations required an investigation. He later told the Senate committee’s staff that his superiors did not open an investigation.

“The topic and incidents were dead on arrival,” he wrote. “My supervisor refused to discuss the matter with me.”

The chief legal officer, Colonel Matthew P. Stoffel, did not respond to requests for comment.

The task force finished up a civilian casualty report on the strike that month and determined that four civilians were killed. But two and a half years later, on the military’s website for its campaign against the Islamic State, known as Operation Inherent Resolve, the military still publicly lists the case as “open.”

A Report Buried

Unwilling to let the issue drop, Colonel Korsak filed a hotline complaint with the inspector general’s office in August 2019.

A four-person team in the office was [already looking into shortcomings](#) in the civilian casualty reporting processes in Syria and quickly set up an interview in a secure setting. After reviewing the high-definition footage and interviewing Colonel Korsak, the team, which included Mr. Tate, told superiors in the inspector general’s office that the allegation of a war crime was “extremely credible.”

“When he came to us, he wanted to make it very clear he had tried everything else first,” Mr. Tate said. “He felt that the I.G. hotline was the only option remaining.”

But like the Air Force lawyer’s earlier effort, Mr. Tate’s team soon hit roadblocks. Central Command was slow to turn over evidence, he said. Mr. Tate obtained video from several drones flying over Baghuz that day, but could not locate the footage from the task force drone that called in the strike.

The inspector general’s office received a second complaint on the hotline about the strike, a spokeswoman said, but Mr. Tate said his team was never told.

Mr. Tate studied the task force’s casualty report, but it didn’t match what he saw on video. The civilian deaths stated in the report were “an impossibly small number,” he said.

The final section of the casualty report was reserved for the legal opinion. In one version of the report that Mr. Tate was sent by the staff at Operation Inherent Resolve, the Baghdad-based military command overseeing operations in Iraq and Syria, a task force lawyer and an operations officer wrote that a violation of the law of armed conflict may have taken place. In another copy that came from Central Command, he said, that opinion had been removed.

Mr. Tate could find no evidence that the Joint Chiefs, the defense secretary or criminal investigators had been alerted, as required.

Within days of interviewing Colonel Korsak, Mr. Tate's team took their findings to supervisors and told them the office was required to alert those officials and criminal investigation agencies. Mr. Tate said his supervisors took no action. The team pressed leaders numerous times over the next several months, and in January 2020, Mr. Tate's team leader drafted a memo that would formally alert authorities. It only needed to be signed by the deputy inspector general overseeing the team. Mr. Tate said the supervisor did not sign it.

In the months that followed in 2020, the team finished its report on broader issues in the civilian casualty reporting process, but as it went through the editing and approval process, which included comments from Central Command, all mentions of the Baghuz strike were cut.

Mr. Tate became increasingly pointed in criticizing the leadership of the inspector general's office. In October 2020, he said he was forced out of his position and escorted from the building by security.

The inspector general report on civilian casualties was [formally released this spring](#) to select members of Congress and the military with the proper security clearances. The office refused to release a public copy or discuss the classified findings, but acknowledged it did not mention Baghuz.

A spokeswoman for the inspector general's office disputed Mr. Tate's account. She said that it alerted the proper authorities at Central Command shortly after receiving the first hotline complaint in 2019. The spokeswoman said the office also notified criminal investigators about the strike in October 2020, 14 months after receiving the hotline call — around the time that Mr. Tate was terminated.

A spokeswoman for the office said a new evaluation of Special Operations Command's adherence to the law of war was expected be completed this month, and that it would include the Baghuz strike. That report will also be classified.

After leaving the office, Mr. Tate refused to give up. He contacted the Senate Armed Services Committee in May and sent a 10-page letter describing the strike and what he viewed as a "systematic failure" on civilian casualty reporting. The committee then contacted Colonel Korsak, who replied with a detailed email.

When asked by The Times about the March 2019 strike, Chip Unruh, a spokesman for Senator Jack Reed, Democrat of Rhode Island and the chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, declined to comment on details of the incident, about which the Central Command has briefed the committee.

He did, however, provide a broader assessment: "When tragic errors occur on the battlefield, the United States, as the leader of the free world, has an obligation to be transparent, take responsibility, and do everything we can to learn from and prevent future mistakes."

Mr. Tate waited for months for the committee to call back and give him an indication that it was actively looking at the case. This week, he said with a sigh that he was still waiting.

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HEADLINE	11/13 Togo: possible militant attack repelled
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/togo-says-repelled-possible-militant-attack-near-burkina-faso-border-2021-11-13/
GIST	LOME, Nov 13 (Reuters) - Togolese security forces repulsed an attack this week by unidentified armed men who had crossed its northern border with Burkina Faso, the government said on Friday, the first possible spillover of Islamist militant violence into Togo.

	<p>It said the attackers targeted a security outpost in Kpendjal prefecture overnight on Tuesday and were pushed back into Burkina Faso without any Togolese casualties.</p> <p>The clash is the first of its kind since the military launched an operation in 2018 to prevent jihadist insurgents linked to al-Qaeda and Islamic State entering from Burkina Faso, where their attacks have killed thousands and displaced 1.2 million people in recent years.</p> <p>President Faure Gnassingbe responded to the attack by instructing the government to continue investing in the security forces to strengthen the capabilities of the Togolese army.</p> <p>Islamist violence has ravaged Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger in West Africa's Central Sahel region north of Togo.</p> <p>Despite a costly international military response, the number of attacks in the region increased eightfold from 2015 to 2020 with 5.5 million people displaced, the U.N. humanitarian agency says.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/12 Report: extremism within the military
SOURCE	https://finance.yahoo.com/news/memri-domestic-terrorism-threat-monitor-173000550.html
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON, DC / ACCESSWIRE / November 12, 2021 / The Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI) Domestic Terrorism Threat Monitor (DTTM) project released a special report by MEMRI Senior Terrorism Analyst A. Agron and the DTTM research team on neo-Nazis and white supremacists in the U.S. military, both current and former. The threat of extremism among U.S. military active duty members and veterans, which dates back decades has recently come to the fore. As part of the current administration's efforts against extremism, it has directed its focus and prioritized the fight against racially motivated violent extremism (RMVE) in all branches of the U.S. military.</p> <p>This DTTM study of neo-Nazi and white supremacist ideologies and online activity among current and former members of the U.S. Armed Forces and foreign militaries provides examples of discussions and commentary by these individuals and groups on social media. These discussions are against top military officials as well as against the U.S. government and other governments, and on topics such as recruitment to extremist groups.</p> <p>Government officials and members of the media may request a copy of this report by emailing dtmsubs@memri.org.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/12 Qatar represents US interests Afghanistan
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/us-representative-kabul-taliban-qatar/2021/11/12/3133cdae-43c0-11ec-a3aa-0255edc02eb7_story.html
GIST	<p>The Biden administration on Friday took a small step toward resolving the many remaining questions about its relations with Afghanistan, naming Qatar as its “protecting power” to handle consular affairs and protect its now-deserted embassy in Kabul.</p> <p>But close U.S. partners in Europe and the region are increasingly concerned at what they see as the administration’s failure to engage on developing a coordinated, longer-term strategy for dealing with the Taliban and avoiding imminent humanitarian disaster.</p> <p>Even as the United States strives to maintain leverage by refusing to allow the interim Taliban government access to frozen funds and international financial institutions, “you can’t just keep threatening,” said an official from the region, one of several from allied governments who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss the sensitive diplomatic issue.</p> <p>Proposals by partner nations for negotiating some kind of sequential relief to Afghanistan in response to specific verifiable Taliban actions have drawn little high-level interest from the administration, as it has</p>

focused much of its energy on keeping its pledge — and responding to increasingly strident congressional demands — to speed up evacuation of U.S. citizens, vulnerable Afghans and their families.

“There are differences of opinion” about what the overall strategy should be, a European official said. “But these discussions aren’t happening . . . There are going to be no developments in the next month. Nothing.”

“It’s partly the fact that [the administration] is so burned by Afghanistan that they don’t know what to do with it,” this official said. “And it’s partly bandwidth,” with so many other policy challenges “they don’t have the capacity to start thinking about it.”

The foreign officials agreed no one wants to give an inch to the Taliban unless there is first real progress on international demands — including full educational opportunity for girls, freedom to travel and an inclusive government.

At the same time, amid ongoing reports of brutality against Afghans despite Taliban commitments, there is rising concern about schisms between hard-line Islamists and “realists” within the militant leadership that complicate any attempt to negotiate or have confidence in specific agreements it might make to unlock international restrictions.

But beyond holding fast to the nonrecognition of the Taliban government, there has been little movement toward the larger unified international strategy that the United States has said it seeks. Even as many worry about the future, “let’s not kid ourselves,” the European official said. “This is an American decision.”

“We have to come up with a plan on how do we help Afghanistan in humanitarian crisis and make sure it is not a failed state,” this official said. “What do we need to do that? How do we get to that place? We are nowhere near that.”

Some worry China is already moving to fill the vacuum, as it seeks to increase its influence in the region, exploit Afghan mineral wealth and recruit Afghanistan to its [Belt and Road initiative](#) for a more direct route to a major Arabian Sea port it has already constructed in southwestern Pakistan.

China’s foreign minister held talks with representatives of the Taliban interim government last month in the Qatari capital of Doha, and its ambassador to Afghanistan, who has remained in Kabul, has met there with the Taliban foreign minister.

While the West warns that the brain drain of educated technocrats and bureaucrats that are Afghanistan’s future will not stop until the Taliban guarantee free travel, “the Chinese are telling them, ‘You don’t need these experts to come back . . . We’ll run your country for you,’ ” the official from the region said.

“The minute they lean more toward China, we’ll all condemn it,” this official said. But to avoid it, the U.S.-led partners must begin specific negotiations, with substantive relief on offers if they get what they are demanding, the official said.

First on the list, officials said, should be an attempt to massively scale up humanitarian assistance to avoid a looming disaster in Afghanistan as the harsh winter approaches.

As international aid organizations warn of imminent mass starvation, the international community has struggled to funnel aid into the country without allowing the Taliban access to any resources or funds. But while [stopgap measures](#) have been implemented to route humanitarian aid into the country, there is no overall plan to ensure it will be enough.

The new U.S.-Qatari agreement, announced in a news conference by Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Qatari Foreign Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman al-Thani Friday, is focused primarily on ongoing U.S. evacuation concerns. An official familiar with the discussions described a Qatari role similar

to that of Switzerland, which represents U.S. interests in Iran, another country with which the United States does not have diplomatic relations.

“Qatar will establish a U.S. interests section within its embassy in Afghanistan to provide certain consular services and monitor the condition and security of U.S. diplomatic facilities in Afghanistan,” Blinken said.

Although neither Qatar nor any other country has established diplomatic relations with Afghanistan under the Taliban, its embassy is one of the few that has continued to operate in Kabul, along with Russia, China and Pakistan. After the Taliban takeover of Kabul in August, the United States and a number of European countries moved [their Afghanistan embassies to Doha](#).

While basking in U.S. appreciation for facilitating the August evacuation of more than 124,000 people as the militants took power, Qatar is among the countries pushing for stepped-up bargaining with the Taliban.

“We believe that abandoning Afghanistan will be a big mistake, and ignoring it, because isolation has never been an answer,” Thani said. “We believe engaging with Taliban since they are in power right now is very important.”

A second U.S.-Qatar agreement formalized Qatar’s role as the primary destination and transit point for Afghans eligible for special immigrant visas, largely because of their work with the American military there over the last two decades.

The administration has come under repeated bipartisan fire on the evacuation issue, as lawmakers, veterans groups and nongovernmental organizations — all with lists of fearful Americans, U.S. permanent residents and at-risk Afghans still inside the country — have pressed for more action.

U.S. officials say they have not gotten enough credit for their efforts and the progress that has been made. “This is in so many ways a complicated story that I’m not sure the American people fully understood,” Blinken said.

He explained — as he and others have on numerous occasions — that the State Department, beginning a month before President Biden’s April announcement that all U.S. troops would withdraw from Afghanistan by September, began “to issue messages to all those we had identified as Americans in Afghanistan, encouraging them and then urging them to leave the country.”

By the time the Taliban entered Kabul in mid-August, with two weeks to go before the U.S. departure deadline of Aug. 31, he said, roughly 6,000 identified American passport holders remained.

“Of those 6,000, virtually all of them were evacuated during the couple of weeks of the evacuation,” Blinken said, and Biden committed to bringing out the rest who wanted to leave.

“And that’s exactly what we have done,” Blinken said. Since the end of the two-week evacuation mission, about 380 Americans have been evacuated. As of Wednesday, as flights out of the country continue, “all U.S. citizens who have requested assistance from the United States government to depart Afghanistan” with the proper documents and their immediate families “have been given an opportunity to do so.”

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HEADLINE	11/12 IS attack Iraq provokes neighbors conflict
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/iraq-islamic-state-attacks-badr/2021/11/11/08518c9c-3ca8-11ec-bd6f-da376f47304e_story.html
GIST	MUQDADIYA, Iraq — The attack on the village of Rashad last month was unusual in recent Iraqi times for its cruelty.

Islamic State gunmen opened fire on a group of seven young men — four cousins, three friends — as they smoked nargilah pipes on a warm evening, residents of the mostly Shiite Muslim village said. Then the militants waited in the dark until a rescue party arrived and turned the guns on them too.

Within hours, Shiite tribesmen had crossed the stream that separates Rashad from its Sunni Muslim neighbors and were going house to house. Families cowered in the foliage. An old man was shot in his bed. By midnight, at least nine more villagers were dead, and the sky burned red as fires ate up their homes.

The initial attack claimed by Sunni extremists of the Islamic State group and the reprisal it provoked underscores how fragile Iraq's peace remains in some areas four years after the militants' caliphate was ousted and highlights their enduring potential to stir sectarian violence.

A member of Iraq's U.S.-trained counterterrorism force said that a similar recent attack in the same province, Diyala, had left five people dead. "ISIS doesn't use car bombs there now," he said, speaking on the condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to talk with the media. "Instead they have snipers and night-vision goggles."

Jihadist groups such as the Islamic State have historically been active in Diyala, where they've tried to capitalize on the grievances of Sunni communities that feel politically marginalized and taken advantage of rugged terrain offering protection from counterinsurgency operations.

The rise of Islamic State militants in 2014 transformed Diyala, a mostly rural province that borders Iran. After fighters of the Badr Organization, an Iraqi Shiite movement aligned with Iran, helped push back the Islamic State militants, Badr consolidated its control in the province. In areas such as Diyala's Muqdadiya district, where Rashad is located, Sunni residents displaced by the war have been allowed home.

"But there are no guarantees of peace to civilians in these areas," said Zmkan Ali Saleem, director of research at the Institute of Regional and International Studies in Iraq. "Security is provided through informal agreements that could collapse at any minute."

With bullets still flying on that October night, the area's governor, Muthanna al-Tamimi, a member of Badr, arrived with Iraqi security forces. Members of the governor's security detail said he had tried to stop the reprisal attacks on Sunni homes.

But villagers who came under assault later said they had seen little evidence of that.

"The security forces were there, but they told us to just go," said one of the survivors, Salima Abed el-Jabouri, 67, who had left with nothing but the clothes she was wearing. "'Run,' an officer shouted at us. 'Go!'"

'It was cruel'

The young men of Rashad had finished dinner early on that evening and snuck out to a spot on the edge of a field that they had called their own for years, where they laid out blankets. The sounds of their laughter carried on the breeze to nearby homes, villagers said.

Soon, so did their screams.

"We just ran out there," Faleh Hassan, 28, said last week as he nursed a bandaged wound on his forearm. "They started firing as we picked up the bodies."

Two teenage cousins, Sajad and Ali, were killed as they raced to the scene on a motorized rickshaw.

"They shot Sajad in the driver's seat, and then kept firing as he curled up and cowered in the back," Ali Abbas, 26, recalled, as several relatives of the dead sobbed. "It was targeted. It was cruel."

In its later claim of responsibility, the Islamic State made clear it had been targeting Shiites.

Across the stream in Nahr al-Imam village, vengeance was quickly sought for the Islamic State massacre. Residents of that village said they had been sleeping when the Shiite tribesmen arrived.

One family described how the gunmen entered every room of the house, hitting a 14-year-old boy with their rifle butts as they demanded to know where to find his father, a village elder. Another teenager said he had recognized one of the attackers as a man who drove a local taxi.

Saleem, the research director, said no one wants to oppose the armed “gangs” in Diyala. “They are very powerful,” he said.

A mass departure

The killings prompted an exodus of Sunni villagers. Nahr al-Imam is empty now, aside from police officers on patrol or standing guard outside scorched buildings.

Almost 2,000 people have sought shelter in surrounding towns, sleeping in mosques or packed into homes, according to aid groups.

In an interview, the governor, Tamimi, insisted that the number was half that. He attributed the discrepancy to people who had already been planning to leave the area but now blamed their exodus on the attack.

In the city of Baquba, Ahmed Saad Kadhim, a student volunteer, said the families had arrived ragged with fear. “Women were sobbing, men were hallucinating,” he said, sitting in a mosque courtyard as aid workers circulated with clipboards and forms. “They didn’t believe anywhere was safe.”

With the trauma still fresh, displaced families say they are struggling to sleep and few believe they can go home any time soon.

Sitting on the rickety frame of a wooden bed, 14-year-old Othman Fares eyed the aid workers with a frown. “We’ve been displaced so many times, we are tired,” he said. “We won’t believe the authorities will look after us again, even if they say they will provide us security.”

A man interjected. “We had five security units by our village that night. Wasn’t that meant to bring security?”

Fares rolled his eyes.

'This whole place feels crazy'

Muqdadiya is so small that it seems everyone knows at least one person who died. In Baquba, the residents of Nahr al-Imam scrolled through cellphone photographs on their phones of their slain loved ones while waiting for news of where they could stay in the coming weeks, listless and worried beneath the midday sun.

Ali Abdulhamid, a man in his early 30s, stopped at the photograph of a 3-year-old victim and looked away. “He was just a child,” he said. “How can you pull a child into your fight?”

Meanwhile, residents of Rashad also agonized over details of the initial attack. As they did, the 6-year-old son of one of the victims stood in the doorway of his home miming as if he were pumping bullets into a pile of shoes.

“He wasn’t like that before,” said Walid Khalid, a relative. “This whole place feels crazy. No one has slept since that night.”

HEADLINE	11/10 DHS: potential threats targeting holidays
SOURCE	https://www.hstoday.us/federal-pages/dhs/new-ntas-bulletin-warns-of-terror-targeting-holidays-healthcare-workers-afghan-resettlement/
GIST	<p>A day before the bulletin issued in August was set to expire, the Department of Homeland Security released a new National Terrorism Advisory System Bulletin today warning of a continuing “diverse and challenging threat environment” as several religious holidays and associated mass gatherings approach “that in the past have served as potential targets for acts of violence.”</p> <p>“These threats include those posed by individuals and small groups engaged in violence, including domestic violent extremists (DVEs) and those inspired or motivated by foreign terrorists and other malign foreign influences,” the bulletin states. “These actors continue to exploit online forums to influence and spread violent extremist narratives and promote violent activity. The ongoing global pandemic continues to exacerbate these threats, in part due to perceived government overreach in implementation of public health safety measures. Further, foreign terrorist organizations and DVEs continue to attempt to inspire potential followers to conduct attacks in the United States, including by exploiting recent events in Afghanistan.”</p> <p>DHS added that as of today they are “not aware of an imminent and credible threat to a specific location in the United States.”</p> <p>The August bulletin focused on the impending 20th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks, increased online chatter among domestic extremists, and potential violence sparked by anger over the reimposition of COVID-19 pandemic-control measures that had DHS on alert that violent extremists “may use particular messaging platforms or techniques to obscure operational indicators that provide specific warning of a pending act of violence.”</p> <p>Warning that “the homeland is facing threats that have evolved significantly and become increasingly complex and volatile in 2021,” DHS previously issued a bulletin in May focused on evolving threats from ideologically motivated violent extremists and potential targets opening up as lockdowns were lifted. The bulletin is a grade below elevated alert or imminent alert advisories under the NTAS.</p> <p>An al-Qaeda magazine marking 20 years since the 9/11 attacks encouraged lone or paired attackers to try to emulate the operation that was carefully planned for years by the terror group, arguing that the tactic of using planes as weapons is “an open door even to lone wolves.” The new NTAS bulletin says that since the 9/11 anniversary and U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan “violent extremist media branches of al-Qa’ida and its affiliates, as well as the Islamic State of Iraq and as-Sham (ISIS), have celebrated perceived victories over the United States and encouraged the use of violence by their followers and supporters to further their objectives.”</p> <p>“These foreign terrorist organizations will likely continue to maintain a highly visible online presence in an attempt to inspire U.S.-based individuals to engage in violent activity,” the bulletin added.</p> <p>Through the end of this year and into 2022 racially or ethnically motivated violent extremists and anti-government/anti-authority violent extremists “will continue to pose a threat to the United States” as “pandemic-related stressors have contributed to increased societal strains and tensions, driving several plots by DVEs, and they may contribute to more violence this and next year.”</p> <p>“If a new COVID-19 variant emerges and new public health restrictions are imposed as a result, anti-government violent extremists could potentially use the new restrictions as a rationale to target government or public health officials or facilities,” the bulletin continues. “In addition, some DVEs have attempted to use the relocation of Afghan nationals to the United States to exacerbate historical DVE grievances over immigration and the American Muslim community.”</p> <p>Domestic violent extremists and individuals inspired by foreign terrorist organizations have targeted crowded commercial facilities, houses of worship, and public gatherings, and continued reopenings coupled with potential “ongoing societal and economic disruptions due to the pandemic, as well as mass</p>

gatherings associated with several dates of religious significance over the next few months, could provide increased targets of opportunity for violence, though there are currently no credible or imminent threats tied to any dates or locations.”

Online propaganda and messaging is playing a critical role in the ongoing threat environment as both foreign and domestic threat actors “continue to introduce, amplify, and disseminate narratives online that promote violence, and have called for violence against elected officials, political representatives, government facilities, law enforcement, religious communities or commercial facilities, and perceived ideological opponents.”

“Ideologically motivated violent extremists fueled by personal grievances and violent extremist ideological beliefs continue to derive inspiration from and obtain operational guidance, including regarding the use of improvised explosive devices and small arms, through the consumption of information shared in online forums,” the bulletin notes. “The use of encrypted messaging by violent extremists may obscure operational indicators that provide specific warning of a pending act of violence.”

Shortly before the last NTAS bulletin, al-Qaeda [released a video](#) inviting parties such as “the raiders of the Congress” in the United States to take advantage of English-language online manuals that have taught Islamist extremists to construct explosive devices and select prime targets. Online training and recruitment materials — dating back to the 2010 debut of al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula’s *Inspire* magazine that included the pressure-cooker bomb recipe used in the 2013 Boston Marathon bombings — are omnipresent in both secluded and high-visibility corners of the web, available for all ideologies to utilize.

“Law enforcement officials have expressed concerns that the broad sharing of false narratives and conspiracy theories that endorse the use of violence will continue to gain traction, resulting in individuals or small groups embracing violent tactics to achieve their desired objectives,” the new bulletin states. “DHS is concerned that increased acts of violence, as well as targeted attacks against law enforcement, may strain local resources and challenge the ability of law enforcement to maintain the safety and security of local communities.” That fear was outlined in the last NTAS bulletin as well.

DHS said that the department and FBI are working with state, local, tribal, and territorial partners, including issuing “numerous” intelligence assessments on the evolving threat.

DHS is also “engaging industry partners to help them identify and respond to the spread of disinformation, conspiracy theories, and false narratives on social media and other online platforms.”

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HEADLINE	11/11 Despite Taliban, Afghan opium to stay?
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2021/nov/11/its-our-lifeline-the-taliban-are-back-but-afghans-say-opium-is-here-to-stay
GIST	<p>The Taliban’s announcement that it plans to ban the production of opium in Afghanistan does not faze seasoned dealer Ahmed Khan*.</p> <p>“They could not fund their war if there were no opium,” says Khan, who operates out of Baramcha, close to the border with Pakistan.</p> <p>He has traded in the drug for a quarter of a century and is confident that the group cannot really afford for trade to stop.</p> <p>“There would be a backlash from the poppy farmers, drug lords and the public if the Taliban bans the opium production. The Taliban has benefited the most from opium production over 20 years.”</p> <p>Afghanistan is the largest opium producer in the world, accounting for more than 80% of global production between 2015 and 2020, and generating millions of dollars annually.</p>

According to the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), an estimated [6,300 tonnes](#) of opium was harvested in Afghanistan last year, an amount that can produce up to 290 tonnes of pure heroin. The amount of land given over to poppy production rose by more than a third between 2019 and 2020, to 224,000 hectares (553,516 acres).

But in his first press conference after the Taliban [swept to power](#) in August, the group's spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid, announced [drug production would stop](#). "From now on, nobody's going to get involved [in the heroin trade], nobody can be involved in drug smuggling," he said.

The announcement immediately saw prices of opium almost double, from 55,000 afghani (£445) for 4.5kg to 100,000 afghani (£810), says Khan.

"But now the traders know it won't be banned, the prices have come down to £510," says Khan, who predicts "there will be a boom in the opium trade" now the Taliban is back in power.

It's not just Khan who doesn't believe the Taliban can or will ban production. With the economy collapsing and a [drought](#) pushing millions [into hunger](#), Taliban officials in the south are warning there is no viable alternative for farmers.

"Farmers are faced with a looming threat of drought. Farmlands and orchards are badly affected and that will force many farmers to grow poppies because it remains the only lifeline," Abdul Ahad, the governor of Helmand province, where the [vast majority of opium is grown](#), told the Guardian.

"If the international community does not accept our demands and the demands of civilians, farmers and the government, the farmers would go back to poppy cultivation because we have no other option.

"The international community should help in making dams, provide seeds and help the farmers to grow other crops."

Attempts by the US to choke off the trade, spending \$8bn over 15 years destroying crops and labs, made little headway. Although the previous leader of the Taliban, Mullah Omar, officially [banned](#) the cultivation and trafficking of opium in 2000, the trade continued.

The past 30 years have seen Baramcha transform from a desolate southern town to the centre of Afghanistan's opium industry – and in a region that remained under Taliban control throughout the US-led occupation. The Taliban taxed traders and traffickers before allowing them to pass through their checkpoints into Pakistan.

In 2019, the latest year for which UNODC has data, the Taliban and other non-state actors collected up to \$113m in opiate taxes. In 2017, which saw a record harvest, up to \$350m was collected.

Khan says he sells at least 50 tonnes of opium a year to buyers in Baramcha, who then smuggle the drug into Pakistan's south-west province of Balochistan. Crossing mountainous and rugged terrain, the smugglers head west into Iran.

Some Afghan farmers are now harvesting up to three poppy crops a year, instead of one, to meet demand.

In Musa Qala, Mohammed Yaqoob stands amid a field of white and pink poppy blossoms that lies beyond a dried up riverbed. The roads in this region of Helmand province are full of potholes, the result of mines and bomb blasts from years of fighting.

Yaqoob has farmed opium in these fields for more than 20 years. He grows other crops, but it is opium that puts food on the table.

"We don't have any other way to earn any money," says Yaqoob, who can make about £2,000 in a good season.

	<p>“If the Taliban would ban opium farming, it means they would want us to starve, which I don’t think they would do. We will resist it.”</p> <p>He adds: “I want the foreigners to leave us Afghans alone and only help us by providing us with seeds and other facilities for agriculture, then we may grow something else other than opium. Otherwise, there is no alternative for us.”</p> <p>Amrullah, who goes by one name, agrees. He has been farming opium in Musa Qala for four decades. He doesn’t own the land, but is responsible for farming and taking care of the crops. In return, he gets a quarter of the earnings, which brings in between £4,000 and £7,000 a year.</p> <p>“We don’t get anything from wheat and vegetables, which need a lot of water and can’t supplement our income,” Amrullah says.</p> <p>“I have earned good money [from opium] from 2015 to 2019, but due to the intense war and drought the crop was affected. As the Taliban are back in power, we are hopeful that we will cultivate poppy and work in peace.”</p> <p><i>* Name changed</i></p>
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HEADLINE	11/11 Pakistan hosts talks on Afghanistan
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/pakistan-hosts-us-russia-china-talks-afghanistan-81104057
GIST	<p>ISLAMABAD -- Pakistan on Thursday hosted talks with special envoys from the United States, Russia and China on the path forward for Afghanistan, where a deepening humanitarian crisis has forced many Afghans to migrate to neighboring countries since the Taliban takeover in August.</p> <p>Afghanistan's Taliban-appointed foreign minister, Amir Khan Muttaqi, was in Islamabad but did not attend the meeting. The international community has not recognized the government appointed by the Taliban after they overran the country.</p> <p>However, Muttaqi later met with the special envoys. He also met separately with Pakistan's Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi and other officials to discuss a range of issues, including how to help Kabul overcome a deepening economic crisis and avoid a refugee crisis.</p> <p>The meeting released a joint statement appealing on the international community to urgently provide humanitarian aid to the Afghan people. It also urged the Taliban to form an inclusive and representative government that respects the rights of all Afghans and provides for the equal rights of women and girls to participate in all aspects of the Afghan society.</p> <p>The statement “welcomed the Taliban’s continued commitment to allow for the safe passage of all who wish to travel to and from Afghanistan and encouraged rapid progress, with the onset of winter, on arrangements to establish airports countrywide that can accept commercial air traffic, which are essential to enable the uninterrupted flow of humanitarian assistance”.</p> <p>It also condemned recent deadly attacks in Afghanistan and asked “the Taliban to cut ties with all international terrorist groups, dismantle and eliminate them in a decisive manner, and to deny space to any terrorist organization operating inside the country.”</p> <p>Thursday's gathering in Islamabad comes weeks after Russia hosted similar talks on Afghanistan, which Washington did not attend. On Wednesday, India hosted senior security officials from Russia, Iran and five Central Asian countries to discuss the ramifications of the Taliban takeover. India's archrival Pakistan and its ally China boycotted those talks.</p>

The Taliban seized power in a blitz offensive that captured the capital, Kabul, and most of the country on Aug. 15, ahead of the final withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan after 20 years of war.

In his remarks at the meeting, Qureshi expressed concerns that an economic collapse in Afghanistan would cause instability in the region and beyond.

"All of us have common concerns related to Afghanistan and also have a shared interest in the country's peace and stability," he said, and also called for the release of Afghan funds frozen by the world community.

Qureshi urged for an "engagement with the new Afghan government" to "help consolidate peace and stability, promote sustainable economic development and help constrict space for terrorist outfits operating from and within Afghanistan," he said.

"With international funding dried up, it has become difficult to pay even salaries, let alone pursue development projects," he added. "The common man is reeling under the effects of a severe drought. Any further downward slide will severely limit the new administration's capacity to run the government" in Afghanistan.

After the meeting, Qureshi said he had told participants the talks would be more productive with the Taliban representative in the room. He said the next meeting of the group was due in Beijing, where the Taliban representative will be invited.

Pakistan has been urging nations to free Afghanistan's assets abroad to enable the Taliban to access those funds to avert the deepening crisis. The Taliban-run administration currently does not have access to the Afghan central bank's \$9 billion in reserves, most of which is held by the New York Federal Reserve.

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Suspicious, Unusual

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HEADLINE	11/11 FAA violent airline passengers \$225K fines
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/travel/article/faa-unruly-passenger-fines/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN) — Federal authorities have slapped 10 violent airline passengers with nearly a quarter-million dollars in new fines for shouting, spitting, screaming, shoving and throwing punches onboard commercial flights.</p> <p>The Federal Aviation Administration fines total \$225,287, the second biggest announcement of fines for unruly passengers since the agency enacted a no-tolerance policy earlier this year.</p> <p>Officials have now proposed more than \$1.45 million in fines against passengers accused of acting out.</p> <p>The FAA fined a Southwest Airlines passenger more than \$26,000 for allegedly punching a flight attendant on a May 5 flight who later "required medical attention." The FAA says earlier, the passenger attempted to enter the cockpit, causing the flight crew to seat the passenger on the floor as the plane landed.</p> <p>Flight crews have reported 5,114 unruly passenger incidents since the start of this year. FAA data shows more than 70% of incidents are over masks.</p> <p>Last week, the FAA announced that 37 of the most serious cases have been referred to federal prosecutors.</p> <p>In a rare joint statement, the FAA and the Department of Justice said they remained committed to sharing information about violent passengers.</p>

	<p>That announcement came after months of pressure from airline worker unions for the federal government to get tougher on violence on commercial flights.</p> <p>"Where the evidence supports criminal review, the FAA refers the cases to the FBI," the joint statement said.</p> <p>The FAA does not have the power to prosecute criminal cases, only to assess civil fines up to \$37,000.</p> <p>"I think we're making good progress, but there's certainly more to be done," FAA Administrator Steve Dickson said at a hearing earlier this month before the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation.</p> <p>"It really does require the cooperation of all those private-sector stakeholders and including the airports, as well as the various aspects of the federal government."</p>
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HEADLINE	11/11 Norway undersea surveillance cables cut
SOURCE	https://www.thedrive.com/the-war-zone/43094/norwegian-undersea-surveillance-network-had-its-cables-mysteriously-cut
GIST	<p>Undersea sensors off the coast of northern Norway that are able to collect data about passing submarines, among other things, have been knocked out, the country's state-operated Institute of Marine Research, or IMR, has revealed. The cause of the damage is unknown, but the cables linking the sensor nodes to control stations ashore are said to have been cut and then disappeared. This has raised suspicions about deliberate sabotage, possibly carried out by the Russian government, which definitely has the means to do so.</p> <p>The IMR, one of the biggest marine research institutes in Europe, described "extensive damage" to the outer areas of the Lofoten-Vesterålen (LoVe) Ocean Observatory, putting the system offline. LoVe, which was only declared fully operational in August 2020, consists of a network of underwater cables and sensors located on the Norwegian Continental Shelf, an area of strategic interest for both Norway and Russia.</p> <p>Norway's military and the country's national Police Security Service are reportedly investigating what happened to the research surveillance system. LoVe's stated purpose is to use its sensors to monitor the effects of climate change, methane emissions, and fish stocks, providing scientists with a live feed of imagery, sound, and other data.</p> <p>Of course, the system also monitors submarine activity in the area, so will immediately be of interest to the Russian Navy, in particular. Indeed, data gathered by its sensors is first sent to the Norwegian Defence Research Establishment, also known by its Norwegian acronym FFI, before being handed over to the IMR for further study. "FFI is believed to routinely remove traces of any submarine activity in the area before turning over the observatory's data to IMR so that it only contains fishing, currents, and climate information," according to a report from Norway's <i>News in English</i> website.</p> <p>"We don't care so much about the submarines in the area (located not far from onshore military installations at Andøya, Evenes and other bases in Northern Norway), but we know the military is," IMR director Sissel Rogne told the Norwegian newspaper <i>Dagens Næringsliv</i>. "You could see what's going on down there regarding all types of U-boats [submarines] and all other countries' U-boats. That's why I didn't think this was just a case for the police but a case for [the police security agency]."</p> <p>"Something or someone has torn out cables in outlying areas," Geir Pedersen, the LoVe project leader, said in a press statement last Friday. Reports indicate that more than 2.5 miles of fiber optic and electrical cables were severed and then removed. In total, LoVe uses more than 40 miles of cables in the Norwegian Sea.</p>

Based on reports in the *Dagens Næringsliv*, the LoVe observatory has been affected by interference since at least April, when the connection between the sensor network and the control station at Hovden on the northern island of Langøya was lost. An unmanned submarine subsequently traced the cause of the breakdown to one of the underwater surveillance platforms, Node 2, which had been dragged away from its normal location with its connecting cable severed and removed.

A follow-up mission in September attempted to trace the cable running from Node 2 with Node 3, only to find that this platform also had been moved, its components damaged, and its cable was missing.

Meanwhile, *News in English* [reports](#) that the surveillance system has not been online since the initial disturbances to its operations in April.

Rogne told *Dagens Næringsliv* that the size and weight of the cable running between Nodes 2 and 3 was so great it would have required something with considerable power to have severed it.

IMR's Øystein Brun told the same newspaper that the institute was now assessing whether the cables were cut deliberately, but suggested that seems the most likely explanation since the crew of a vessel should have noticed if they had accidentally become entangled with them and would likely have reported it.

It's also unclear what has happened to the missing cable, around 9.5 tons in all, which has not been recovered.

Part of the investigation has sought to identify the vessels that were active in the area in question as of April this year. According to the IMR, that has been made more difficult by the fact that some of them likely were underway without transponders activated, meaning they would not have been broadcasting their positions to the Coast Guard or other agencies. Any vessel attempting to tamper with the cables would probably have had its transponder off, implying that a foreign power performed this act deliberately. In the meantime, at least some of the vessels in the area at the time have been identified, although no more details have been disclosed.

The reasons why a foreign nation may have attempted to sever the cables, and take them away, are several. First, as we have already seen, the surveillance system is an important means for Norway to track foreign submarine activity in the Norwegian Sea, potentially restricting certain operations in these waters. Second, this power may have wanted to explore the type of information that the LoVe system is capable of gathering, to give an idea of the sorts of capabilities available to Norway and, by extension, NATO. Third, as IMR director Rogne [pointed out](#), the cables themselves may yield valuable technical information, for anyone wanting to install a similar system, for example.

With the Russian Navy's Northern Fleet on Norway's doorstep, it would not be unexpected to see suspicion fall upon some kind of Russian espionage or sabotage activity, although the IMR is so far being circumspect on this matter. While we don't know what happened, there could also be a more banal explanation, perhaps an unintended tangling of the cables with some kind of vessel or as the result of deep-sea dredging during oil exploration.

However, *News in English* reports that there has been "lots of Russian shipping activity in the area of late, often cropping up around Norwegian offshore infrastructure." In this case, the activity referred to is legal, but the implication is that this is an area in which Russia has a particular interest, and in which its vessels, naval and civilian, operate routinely.

While the area is very close to the Norwegian coast, it's also adjacent to the Greenland, Iceland, United Kingdom Gap, or GIUK Gap, a major strategic bottleneck through which Russian submarines would need to break through undetected if they wish to move out into the wider Atlantic without being traced.

Norwegian authorities have publicly disclosed Russian interference with and otherwise aggressive actions toward other sensor and communications networks in the region in the past. In 2018, the Norwegian Intelligence Service (NIS) disclosed three separate instances where Russian aircraft had flown mock attack

profiles [against a secretive radar station](#) in the northern part of the country. The year before, the NIS [blamed Russian jamming](#) for disruptions in cell phone and GPS service in the region, though it said this was a byproduct of an exercise and not a deliberate attack.

Prior to these new developments involving the LoVe, various reports have suggested that Russia has been deploying boats at least close to undersea cables in the North Atlantic, part of a general uptick in its [naval operations in those waters](#). Recent activity has included the presence of the survey ship [Yantar](#) off the [Atlantic coast of Ireland](#) in August. As well as carrying deep-sea submersibles and sonar systems, the *Yantar* has been repeatedly suspected of covert operations involving undersea cables.

“We are now seeing Russian underwater activity in the vicinity of undersea cables that I don’t believe we have ever seen,” U.S. Navy Rear Adm. Andrew Lennon, then serving as [NATO’s top submarine officer](#), told [The Washington Post](#) in December 2017. “Russia is clearly taking an interest in NATO and NATO nations’ undersea infrastructure.”

Certainly, Russia possesses special mission submarines that could well be equipped to both cut and tap cables, or even remove them for further study, as seems to have been the case with the LoVe network. In particular, U.S. Northern Command has highlighted the potential threat posed by the Russian Navy’s nuclear-powered midget submarine [Losharik](#), compounded by the fact that it’s judged especially difficult to detect and monitor.

In an [earlier piece](#) on the *Losharik*, *The War Zone* described its covert role and unique capabilities as follows:

The Main Directorate of Deep-Sea Research, Russia’s main naval intelligence entity, also known by the Russian acronym [GUGI](#), operates Losharik and its primary missions are investigating, manipulating, and recovering objects on the seabed, such as hunting for items of intelligence value or tapping or cutting seabed cables. The small submarine is also designed to ride underneath a larger submarine mothership to get closer to the target area. GUGI has a [number of motherships](#) converted from ballistic missile and [cruise missile submarines](#).

Losharik [has been laid up](#) since [suffering extensive damage](#) in a fatal fire in 2019, but Russia [has other](#) similar [special-mission boats available](#), as well as [large mothership submarines](#) capable of [bringing them covertly](#) to and from a mission area.

The capabilities thought to be provided by the *Losharik*, [and others like it](#) in Russian service, have long been a worry for NATO officials. Their concerns include hostile submarines operating close to their coasts and undetected while carrying out missions including tapping cables, deploying sensors, or otherwise collecting intelligence. Even one Russian submarine could potentially wield power far greater than its size, representing a powerful asymmetric naval threat by [cutting cable completely](#) as an information warfare tactic. While we have no evidence that this is what happened off the coast of Norway, it’s would be expected that this scenario would at least be a line of inquiry.

That the North Atlantic is an area of renewed interest for the Russian military is also no surprise, given the establishment of a new Northern Fleet Joint Strategic Command in 2014, responsible for the Arctic, North Atlantic, and Scandinavian regions. It includes the Northern Fleet, assets of which are concentrated on the Kola Peninsula, as well as military garrisons, and airbases, including a growing number of [forward-located airfields](#) in the High North. The Russian Navy has been exploring [establishing underwater sensor networks](#) and [other infrastructure](#), including [nuclear reactors](#) on the seafloor to provide power, in the region, as well.

The United States has also stepped up its military presence in this wider region, with a particular tilt toward cooperation with Norway. In recent years, this has joint exercises [in the air](#) and [on the ground](#) and consideration has also been given to operating U.S. Navy submarines [from a cavernous naval base](#) built under a Norwegian mountain. U.S. Navy submarines have been a more visible presence in the region. This includes a [rare publicized appearance](#) by the first-in-class [USS Seawolf](#) surfaced in a fjord near Tromsø last year and [an actual port visit there](#) by the *Virginia* class attack submarine [USS New Mexico](#) in May of this year.

Seemingly, the LoVe case has proven very puzzling — and costly — for the IMR, although it's not clear what kinds of evidence have been gathered by the Norwegian military or intelligence services. As it stands, however, for the time being, Norway has lost a very important source of surveillance for all manner of underwater activities. While the IMR will hope to bring at least a part of the system back online as soon as it can, the Norwegian Armed Forces will likely also be eager to have this source of underwater intelligence restored as soon as possible.

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HEADLINE	11/12 EU Commission approves insects as food
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2021/11/12/locusts-larvae-cricket-european-union/
GIST	<p>For millennia, locusts have disrupted human food supplies by devouring crops. But the European Union may be turning the tables. Now it is the locusts being served up.</p> <p>On Friday, the European Commission added the locusta migratoria, the most widespread locust species, to its list of foods authorized for sale in the European Union. The insects will be considered a “novel food” when sold in frozen, dried and powdered forms, the E.U. executive branch announced.</p> <p>“It is intended to be marketed as a snack or as a food ingredient, in a number of food products,” the European Commission said in a statement. “In the frozen and dried forms, legs and wings have to be removed by the food business operator to reduce the risk of intestinal constipation.”</p> <p>The decision, which came after an application from a Dutch firm that breeds locusts and other insects, is part of a shifting approach by the European Union to insect-based foods.</p> <p>In June, the European Commission added the dried yellow mealworm larvae of the beetle Tenebrio molitor to its approved food list. The larvae could be “used as whole, dried insect in the form of snacks, and as a food ingredient in a number of food products, the target population being the general population.”</p> <p>The two insects were added to the list after being backed by the European Food Safety Authority. The EFSA also recently gave its backing to whole house crickets, noting that the food was “not nutritionally disadvantageous,” though crickets have not yet been added to the novel food list.</p> <p>The EU’s Novel Food Regulation has existed since 1997, with the supranational body defining the term as “newly developed, innovative food, food produced using new technologies and production processes, as well as food which is or has been traditionally eaten outside of the EU.”</p> <p>Though the consumption of insects is not the norm in Europe, it is far from unusual in some parts of the world. In Mexico and some other parts of Central America, toasted grasshoppers are eaten, often as a snack or with alcohol. Seasoned with salt, chilies and lime juice, they are known as chapulines.</p> <p>Crickets are also eaten regularly in Thailand and some other parts of Asia. The European Commission admits that insects are already on the menu in some parts of Europe, as whole insects are not subject to the same approval restrictions. By one United Nations estimate, roughly 2 billion people already include insects in their diets.</p> <p>In recent years, there has been a push to expand the consumption of insects, with advocates arguing that they can be just as nutritious as meat and better for the environment, as they do not require large amounts of land to farm or produce greenhouse gases like methane at a significant scale.</p> <p>Earlier this year, the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization released a report that looked at insects from a food safety perspective, calling for more investigations into how mass farming of insects for consumption would affect food safety.</p> <p>In its statement, the European Commission said that it was “up to consumers to decide whether they want to eat insects or not.”</p>

HEADLINE	11/12 Homer Plessy 1892 arrest; justice now?
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/12/us/plessy-ferguson-pardon.html
GIST	<p>On June 7, 1892, a racially mixed shoemaker from New Orleans named Homer Plessy bought a first-class ticket for a train bound for Covington, La., and took a seat in the whites-only car. He was asked to leave, and after he refused, he was dragged from the train and charged with violating the Louisiana Separate Car Act. He pleaded guilty and was fined \$25.</p> <p>On Friday, nearly 130 years after the arrest, the Louisiana Board of Pardons voted to clear his record.</p> <p>“There is no doubt that he was guilty of that act on that date,” Jason Williams, the Orleans Parish district attorney, told the board during a brief hearing on Friday. “But there is equally no doubt that such an act should have never been a crime in this country.”</p> <p>The arrest elevated Plessy into the central figure in a legal battle that reached the U.S. Supreme Court. The landmark ruling that resulted in the case, Plessy v. Ferguson, came to be regarded as one of most shameful decisions in the court’s history as well as one of the most consequential. It endorsed the “separate but equal” doctrine and gave legal backing to the Jim Crow laws that segregated and disenfranchised African Americans in the South for decades.</p> <p>Officials described pardoning Plessy, who died in 1925, as a way to attempt to rectify wrongs of the past and, beyond that, acknowledge the vast and devastating reach the Supreme Court decision had. Mr. Williams said the racial disparities and discrimination that extended from that ruling ultimately were at the heart of the protests that erupted last year after the death of George Floyd.</p> <p>“Much of that is based on this Supreme Court ruling and everything that grew from it,” Mr. Williams said in an interview.</p> <p>The board’s decision was sent to Gov. John Bel Edwards, who will decide whether to grant the posthumous pardon. A spokeswoman for Mr. Edwards said on Friday that he was traveling but “looks forward to receiving and reviewing the recommendation of the board upon his return.”</p> <p>In making their decision, board officials cited the Avery C. Alexander Act, legislation named for the civil rights leader and longtime member of the Louisiana House of Representatives, which calls for pardoning individuals who had been convicted of violating laws enacted with the purpose of enforcing segregation or discrimination.</p> <p>The 1890 Louisiana Separate Car Act was precisely that kind of law, part of a flurry of segregationist legislation pursued across the South in an effort to construct a new racist order after Reconstruction.</p> <p>“It has never been used,” Mr. Williams said of the Alexander Act. “It almost makes you think it was designed for just this moment, for Homer Plessy.”</p> <p>Plessy had boarded the East Louisiana Railway’s No. 8 train in New Orleans intending to get arrested. He was an activist who was part of a local civil rights group that was infuriated by the Separate Car Act. The group chose Plessy as the one to ride the train because he could pass for a white man.</p> <p>A conductor asked Plessy if he was “colored,” and he said that he was. When the conductor instructed him to move to a different car, Plessy resisted. After his arrest, the activist group, the Citizens’ Committee to Test the Constitutionality of the Separate Car Act, posted his \$500 bond.</p> <p>His first court appearance came four months later before Judge John Howard Ferguson, who decided not to bring the case to trial, which allowed Plessy’s lawyers to bring an appeal to higher courts. The case continued on for several years before it reached the Supreme Court in 1896. The court ruled against Plessy, 7-1.</p>

The lone dissenter, Justice John Marshall Harlan, wrote: “In respect of civil rights, all citizens are equal before the law. The humblest is the peer of the most powerful. The law regards man as man and takes no account of his surroundings or his color when his civil rights as guaranteed by the supreme law of the land are involved.”

The notion of separate but equal was maintained until the Brown v. Board of Education decision in 1954. In the meantime, Plessy returned to Judge Ferguson’s courtroom, where he entered his guilty plea and was fined. He went on to work as a collector for an insurance company.

In recent years, descendants of both sides of the case joined together to create a foundation, bonding over their shared history and working to educate others on its relevance now. Plessy v. Ferguson, as the descendants like to say, had become Plessy and Ferguson.

“We cannot undo the wrongs of the past, but we can and should acknowledge them and learn from them,” said Phoebe Ferguson, a descendant of Judge Ferguson.

Part of their efforts are amplifying Plessy’s legacy, trying to bring more attention to him and show the link between his efforts as an activist and the nonviolent disobedience of the civil rights movement that came generations later.

“Our ancestor was a civil rights activist even before the term was used,” said Keith M. Plessy, a distant relative of Plessy’s who, with Ms. Ferguson, started the organization, the Plessy and Ferguson Foundation. “I think we promote New Orleans now, we can promote it as the cradle of the modern civil rights movement.”

The board’s decision was thrilling, Mr. Plessy said, adding that he had to strain to hold back tears. But the work was not just a backward-looking endeavor. His and Ms. Ferguson’s efforts, they said, were also about fixing the inequalities and injustices that endure and encouraging others to find common ground, as they did.

“I once met Rosa Parks, and as I kneeled before her and thanked her for all her hard work, she said to me, ‘Get up, boy! Your name is Plessy. You got work to do,’” Mr. Plessy recalled on Friday as he spoke to the board, urging the members to forward his ancestor’s case to the governor. “I’ll admit I didn’t know what she meant then, but I’m sure now, and I’m convinced that she was talking about the work we’re doing today.”

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HEADLINE	11/12 Seattle sent homeless funds to fraudsters
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/homeless/nearly-1-million-in-seattle-homeless-funds-may-have-been-stolen-emails-show/
GIST	<p>The city of Seattle mistakenly sent more than \$800,000 of funds intended to help homeless people to fraudsters earlier this year, according to emails obtained by The Seattle Times. The city confirmed in a statement that the FBI and U.S. Secret Service are investigating.</p> <p>Nine payments sent between November 2020 and April 2021, totaling more than \$800,000, went to what the city thought was an account owned by family homelessness nonprofit Mary’s Place but wasn’t, emails between the nonprofit and the city indicate. The problem wasn’t caught for months, and officials have not explained how the mistake happened but point to potential scammers.</p> <p>The city is reimbursing the nonprofit for the lost money, and taking steps to prevent further fraud, a city spokesperson wrote in a statement.</p> <p>The news came as a surprise to many councilmembers Friday.</p>

City Councilmember Teresa Mosqueda, who chairs the budget committee, said she was not notified about the suspected fraud. The council is now nearly finished with next year's budget deliberations.

A spokesperson for the city says staff did inform Councilmember Lisa Herbold, the human services committee chair, in June, and provided emails sent to the council member. Herbold acknowledged that the city notified her but said she wasn't notified of the amount of the fraud.

"I would've hoped everybody would've been informed of the extent of the issue," Herbold said.

Councilmember Andrew Lewis, who chairs the city's homelessness committee, said he intends to introduce an amendment next week to put more funding toward the city auditor's office in the hopes of catching issues like this quicker.

"This should be a wake-up call for us to put more money into performance auditing and the office of the city auditor," Lewis said.

Mary's Place confirmed that the organization has started to receive city payments for what is missing. "Mary's Place has provided information to assist the City of Seattle in their fraud investigation," Mary's Place wrote in a statement to The Seattle Times.

No one caught the issue, at the city or Mary's Place, until well into June 2021, emails indicate.

Officials might have missed the issue because [Mary's Place in the last decade](#) has become a favorite receptacle for assets from big-ticket funders such as Amazon founder Jeff Bezos, and had \$22.5 million in total revenue in 2019, according to tax documents. For the city, too, it is a fairly small amount — less than one percent of the city's entire \$167 million homelessness budget.

The city uses public funds to pay Mary's Place and dozens of other providers for outreach, shelter and food for the city's homeless population, which was the third-highest in the nation at last count.

The city's human services department has also been chronically understaffed, particularly in its homelessness division, for months while that division prepares to be replaced largely by the King County Regional Homelessness Authority.

Emails obtained via public records request show that in June, Marty Hartman, executive director of Mary's Place, emailed the city's director of finance and administrative services, Calvin Goings, with the subject line "URGENT: FINANCE CONCERN."

"We've discovered the bank account that was associated with Mary's Place automatic payments from the City of Seattle has been changed without our knowledge and our city payments have been deposited to an unknown bank account," Hartman wrote.

In follow-up emails between the chief financial officer at Mary's Place, Kristi Tollner, and employees at the city, Tollner said that after signing up for direct deposit with the city in November 2020, the nonprofit stopped receiving most payments.

The case may have involved someone "posing" as Mary's Place, according to a spokesperson for the state auditor, whose office was notified of the loss in late July.

In July, the city's Human Services Department's chief financial officer, Joseph Kasperski, said in an email that the deposits were sent to a "fraudulent account" and that the city was working with the FBI and the Secret Service, which investigates cyber fraud.

A city spokesperson wrote in an email to The Seattle Times that federal investigators determined that the city and Mary's Place were victims of fraud with losses totaling approximately \$831,062 over a six-month period.

Jenna Franklin, director of external affairs for the human services department, said in an email that the department worked with the city's treasury division to figure out how to prevent future fraud attempts. Franklin said that there are now multiple safeguards to ensure payments arrive at the correct account.

"These safeguards enhance the auditability of payments made to vendors while minimizing the potential of future identity theft attempts," Franklin said.

Franklin also wrote that the city is reimbursing Mary's Place, reviewing other "suppliers" who changed their payment instructions recently, and will be changing its policy for verification practices this month.

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HEADLINE	11/11 Tree DNA evidence sends poacher to prison
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2021/11/11/tree-dna-evidence-maple-poacher/
GIST	<p>The trees are fighting back.</p> <p>They're under threat from the effects of climate change and raging forest fires — and this week they have ensured the person behind an illegal logging operation will be imprisoned for 20 months.</p> <p>A case in Washington State represents the first use of DNA evidence from trees during a prosecution in a federal criminal trial.</p> <p>Justin Andrew Wilke, 39, and a crew of associates were found to have conducted an illegal logging operation in the Elk Lake area of the Olympic National Forest, between April and August 2018. The group removed highly prized maple trees — used to produce musical instruments such as violins and guitars — and forged permits to sell the wood, according to a statement from the U.S. Attorney's Office Western District of Washington. Wilke was sentenced on Monday.</p> <p>At the trial, a research geneticist for the U.S. Agriculture Department's Forest Service testified that the wood Wilke sold was a genetic match to the remains of three poached maple trees that investigators had discovered in the Elk Lake area.</p> <p>The DNA analysis was so precise that it found the probability of the match being coincidental was approximately 1 in 1 undecillion (1 followed by 36 zeros), the statement added.</p> <p>Based on this evidence, the jury concluded that the wood Wilke had sold to local mills, had been stolen. The DNA evidence also proved that Wilke had unlawfully harvested and sold wood from seven other maple trees, but the precise locations of those trees have yet to be determined.</p> <p>The novel tree genetics convinced jury members in Tacoma, Wash., following a six-day trial, to convict Wilke for conspiracy, theft of public property, trafficking in unlawfully harvested timber, among other offenses.</p> <p>"When people steal trees from our public lands, they are stealing a beautiful and irreplaceable resource from all of us and from future generations," Tessa M. Gorman, acting U.S. attorney of the Western District of Washington, said in a news release in July.</p> <p>The Olympic National Forest is known for its towering, lush and wide-trunked trees. The bigleaf maple is among the more prized inhabitant — its patterned wood often coveted for woodworking and manufacturing musical instruments. But it is illegal to chop down trees in national forests without a permit.</p> <p>In 2018 Wilke and two others decided one night to cut a bigleaf maple, which contained a wasp's nest near the tree's base. To remove the nest, they sprayed insecticide and likely gasoline before lighting it on fire. The group failed to extinguish the fire, which developed into a wildfire and became known as the Maple Fire.</p>

It consumed more than 3,300 acres between August and November 2018 and cost approximately \$4.2 million to contain, the court said.

Wilke has always maintained that he did not cause the forest fire, his attorney, Gregory Murphy, [previously](#) told The Washington Post. The jury did not convict Wilke of the two federal counts related to the forest fire but did convict him of attempting to cut down the tree where the blaze was set on the night of the fire.

At sentencing, Judge Benjamin H. Settle concluded that the evidence was clear and convincing that Wilke was present when the fire was set and more likely than not personally set or directed one of his crew to set the fire. But Settle also noted that Wilke had made positive strides while on pretrial release, and that prison time was more difficult during the [coronavirus](#) pandemic, awarding him a 20-month sentence.

Wilke was also ordered to forfeit the proceeds of his illegal poaching and is required to pay restitution to the U.S. Forest Service.

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Crime, Criminals

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HEADLINE	11/14 Portland police manhunt: 2 shot at cops
SOURCE	https://www.foxnews.com/us/portland-police-searching-for-two-suspects-who-fired-multiple-rounds-at-officers-striking-cruiser
GIST	<p>A manhunt is underway in Portland, Oregon, for two suspects who allegedly fired multiple rounds at officers on Saturday night during a traffic stop.</p> <p>One of the rounds struck a police car's rearview mirror but no officers were injured in the shooting.</p> <p>"As Chief, and as a member of the Portland community, I'm appalled and outraged at these acts of attempted murder," Portland Police Chief Chuck Lovell said in a statement on Sunday.</p> <p>"Facing one's mortality can be traumatic and jarring. Last night was a challenging situation, but as usual, Bureau members met it with the courage and dedication they're known for."</p> <p>The incident began when officers initiated a traffic stop on a wanted suspect in eastern Portland around 5:30 p.m. on Saturday.</p> <p>The suspect tried to elude officers but the car came to a stop when the vehicle's tires were hit with spike strips. Two suspects, a man and a woman, then fled on foot.</p> <p>"Officers were pulling in to challenge them and as they jumped out and ran away, that's when the shots were fired," a police spokesperson said at the scene on Saturday night.</p> <p>Authorities implemented a shelter-in-place order for the city's Hazelwood neighborhood but lifted it shortly before midnight following an extensive search.</p> <p>Portland saw an 83% increase in homicides in 2020 and has already surpassed that this year with a record 72 homicides so far in 2021.</p> <p>The city cut its police budget last year, but Mayor Ted Wheeler proposed a \$5 million investment earlier this month to add 200 more officers and buy body-worn cameras.</p> <p>"Many Portlanders no longer feel safe in their city," Wheeler said at a news conference on Nov. 3.</p>

	"Business owners have closed up shop for fear of doing business in high-risk areas. Commuters fear for their safety, whether taking public transport or going by foot. Parents are scared to let their children play outside."
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HEADLINE	11/15 Georgia jail break: 5 escape; 1 recaptured
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2021/11/14/us/georgia-inmates-escape-jail/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)A reward is being offered for the capture of four inmates still at large after escaping from a south Georgia jail on Friday, with one inmate recaptured after making it only as far as a neighboring county.</p> <p>The Georgia Bureau of Investigation (GBI) issued a Blue Alert after the five -- including two accused of murder -- escaped from the Pulaski County Jail shortly after 11 p.m. Friday.</p> <p>The inmates were identified as Tyree Williams Jr., Dennis Penix Jr., Brandon Pooler, Tyres Jackson and Lewis Evans III, according to the GBI.</p> <p>Tyres Montan Jackson was taken into custody in Warner Robins Sunday, according to the GBI, while police continue the search for the other four escaped inmates.</p> <p>"The U.S. Marshals Service is offering a reward of up to \$5000.00 for information leading to the direct arrest of any of the wanted escapees. #BlueAlert" the GBI went on to say in their tweet.</p> <p>All five inmates have a history of violent crimes and are armed with two stun guns, the GBI says. They stole a white 2015 KIA Sedona van from Pulaski County Jail parking lot after escaping the prison. The van's Georgia license plate reads CMP8628.</p> <p>Pulaski County Sheriff Danny Brannen told WMAZ at least one of the five inmates attacked a female jailer when she was in a cell, talking with an inmate.</p> <p>CNN has reached out to Brannen and the GBI for additional information Sunday.</p> <p>Authorities are asking the public not to approach the individuals. Anyone who sees them should call 911, the GBI said.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/14 Workers federal prisons committing crimes
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/federal-prisons-5be574b4103a2f5420e0d9da2daf5c9c
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON (AP) — More than 100 federal prison workers have been arrested, convicted or sentenced for crimes since the start of 2019, including a warden indicted for sexual abuse, an associate warden charged with murder, guards taking cash to smuggle drugs and weapons, and supervisors stealing property such as tires and tractors.</p> <p>An Associated Press investigation has found that the federal Bureau of Prisons, with an annual budget of nearly \$8 billion, is a hotbed of abuse, graft and corruption, and has turned a blind eye to employees accused of misconduct. In some cases, the agency has failed to suspend officers who themselves had been arrested for crimes.</p> <p>Two-thirds of the criminal cases against Justice Department personnel in recent years have involved federal prison workers, who account for less than one-third of the department's workforce. Of the 41 arrests this year, 28 were of BOP employees or contractors. The FBI had just five. The Drug Enforcement Administration and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives each had two.</p> <p>The numbers highlight how criminal behavior by employees festers inside a federal prison system meant to punish and rehabilitate people who have committed bad acts. The revelations come as advocates are pushing the Biden administration to get serious about fixing the bureau.</p>

In one case unearthed by the AP, the agency allowed an official at a federal prison in Mississippi, whose job it was to investigate misconduct of other staff members, to remain in his position after he was arrested on charges of stalking and harassing fellow employees. That official was also allowed to continue investigating a staff member who had accused him of a crime.

In a statement to the AP, the Justice Department said it “will not tolerate staff misconduct, particularly criminal misconduct.” The department said it is “committed to holding accountable any employee who abuses a position of trust, which we have demonstrated through federal criminal prosecutions and other means.”

Attorney General Merrick Garland has said his deputy, Lisa Monaco, meets regularly with Bureau of Prisons officials to address issues plaguing the agency.

Federal prison workers in nearly every job function have been charged with crimes. Those employees include a teacher who pleaded guilty in January to [fudging an inmate’s high school equivalency](#) and a [chaplain who admitted taking at least \\$12,000 in bribes](#) to smuggle Suboxone, which is used to treat opioid addiction, as well as marijuana, tobacco and cellphones, and leaving the items in a prison chapel cabinet for inmates to retrieve.

At the highest ranks, the warden of a federal women’s prison in Dublin, California, [was arrested in September and indicted this month](#) on charges he molested an inmate multiple times, scheduled times where he demanded she undress in front of him and amassed a slew of nude photos of her on his government-issued phone.

Warden Ray Garcia, who was placed on administrative leave after the FBI [raided his office in July](#), allegedly told the woman there was no point in reporting the sexual assault because he was “close friends” with the person who would investigate the allegation and that the inmate wouldn’t be able to “ruin him.” Garcia has pleaded not guilty.

Garcia’s arrest came three months after a recycling technician at FCI Dublin was arrested on charges he coerced two inmates into sexual activity. Several other workers at the facility, where actresses Felicity Huffman and Lori Loughlin spent time for their involvement in the college admissions bribery scandal, are under investigation.

Monaco said after Garcia’s arrest that she was “taking a very serious look at these issues across the board” and insisted she had confidence in the bureau’s director, Michael Carvajal, months after senior administration officials were [weighing whether to oust him](#).

In August, the associate warden at the Metropolitan Detention Center in New York City was charged with killing her husband — a fellow federal prison worker — after police said she shot him in the face in their New Jersey home. She has pleaded not guilty.

One-fifth of the BOP cases tracked by the AP involved crimes of a sexual nature, second only to cases involving smuggled contraband. All sexual activity between a prison worker and an inmate is illegal. In the most egregious cases, inmates say they were coerced through fear, intimidation and threats of violence.

A correctional officer and drug treatment specialist at a Lexington, Kentucky, prison medical center were charged in July with [threatening to kill inmates or their families](#) if they didn’t go along with sexual abuse. A Victorville, California, inmate said she [“she felt frozen and powerless with fear”](#) when a guard threatened to send her to the “hole” unless she performed a sex act on him. He pleaded guilty in 2019.

Theft, fraud and lying on paperwork after inmate deaths have also been issues.

Earlier this month, three employees and eight former inmates at the notorious New York City federal jail where financier Jeffrey Epstein killed himself were indicted in what prosecutors said was an [extensive](#)

[bribery and contraband smuggling scheme](#). The Justice Department closed the jail in October, citing deplorable conditions for inmates. Last year, a gun got into the building.

One of the charged employees, a unit secretary, was also accused of misrepresenting gang member Anthony “Harv” Ellison as a “model inmate” to get him a lesser sentence.

The Bureau of Prisons, which houses more than 150,000 federal inmates and employs about 37,500 people, has lurched from crisis to crisis in the past few years, from the rampant spread of coronavirus inside prisons and a [failed response to the pandemic](#) to [dozens of escapes](#), deaths and [critically low staffing levels](#) that have [hampered responses to emergencies](#).

In interviews with the AP, more than a dozen bureau staff members have also raised concerns that the agency’s disciplinary system has led to an outsize focus on alleged misconduct by rank-and-file employees and they say allegations of misconduct made against senior executives and wardens are more easily brushed aside.

“The main concern with the Bureau of Prisons is that wardens at each institution, they decide if there’s going to be any disciplinary investigation or not,” said Susan Canales, vice president of the union at FCI Dublin. “Basically, you’re putting the fox in charge of the henhouse.”

At the federal prison in Yazoo City, Mississippi, the official tasked with investigating staff misconduct has been the subject of numerous complaints and multiple arrests. The bureau has not removed him from the position or suspend him — a deviation from standard Justice Department practice.

In one instance, a prison worker reported that the official assaulted him inside a housing unit, according to a police report obtained by the AP. Internal documents detail allegations that the official grabbed the officer’s arm and trapped him inside an inmate’s cell, blocking his path.

The same official was arrested in another instance when a different employee contacted the local sheriff’s office, accusing him of stalking and harassing her. The AP is not identifying the official by name because some of the criminal charges were later dropped.

In both instances, the victims said they reported the incidents to the prison complex warden, Shannon Withers, and to the Justice Department’s inspector general. But they say the Bureau of Prisons failed to take any action, allowing the official to remain in his position despite pending criminal charges and allegations of serious misconduct.

A bureau spokesperson, Kristie Breshears, declined to discuss the case or address why the official was never suspended.

Breshears said the agency is “committed to ensuring the safety and security of all inmates in our population, our staff, and the public” and that allegations of misconduct are “thoroughly investigated for potential administrative discipline or criminal prosecution.”

The bureau said it requires background checks and carefully screens and evaluates prospective employees to ensure they meet its core values. The agency said it requires its employees to “conduct themselves in a manner that fosters respect for the BOP, Department of Justice, and the U.S. Government.”

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HEADLINE	11/14 Tucson trailer park shooting: 4 dead
SOURCE	https://www.seattlepi.com/news/article/Police-3-people-killed-in-shooting-at-a-Tucson-16619981.php
GIST	<p>TUCSON, Ariz. (AP) — Four people are dead after an early-morning shooting Sunday at a trailer park on Tucson’s south side that followed a confrontation between two groups, police said.</p> <p>They said neighbors in the large mobile home community began calling 911 shortly before 1 a.m. about a shooting.</p>

	<p>Officers arrived to find three people shot and they all were declared dead at the scene.</p> <p>Police said a fourth person was found injured at the scene and later died at a hospital.</p> <p>According to police, a group of men went to the mobile home and confronted the homeowner and a guest.</p> <p>Shots were fired and several people fled from the scene, witnesses told police.</p> <p>They said the homeowner wasn't hurt, but a guest sustained non-life-threatening injuries.</p> <p>Officer Francisco Magos, a police spokesman, said the names of the dead were being withheld until their relatives could be notified.</p> <p>Magos said no charges against any of the survivors have been filed at this time.</p> <p>He said the scene was secure the shooting remained under investigation.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/14 Gangs, militants in Rohingya settlements
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/14/world/asia/rohingya-refugees-bangladesh.html
GIST	<p>At night in the refugee camps, with only a thin tarpaulin wall as protection, Mohammed waits for the men to come and kill him.</p> <p>In less than a month, assassins have killed at least eight people in the Rohingya refugee settlements of southeastern Bangladesh, silencing those who have dared to speak out against the violent gangs that plague the camps. As with Mr. Mohammed, the militants threatened their victims before they killed, leaving their targets in a perpetual panic.</p> <p>"I am living under the knife of a fearful and depressing life," said Mr. Mohammed, a community organizer whose full name is not being used because of the documented risks he faces. "I came to Bangladesh from Myanmar because I would be killed there. Here, also, there are no guarantees for a safe life."</p> <p>In the world's largest single refugee encampment, life is becoming unlivable. Already, Rohingya Muslims had to flee ethnic cleansing in their native Myanmar, ending up in a sprawl of shelters that ranks among the most tightly packed places on earth. Now, among the warrens of tents clinging to denuded hills, militants search for recruits, drug traffickers roam and kidnappers prey on women and children.</p> <p>Worst of all, residents say, there is little hope of recourse or refuge. Some of those who were killed over the past month had warned Bangladeshi and international authorities that their names were on a hit list compiled by the biggest militant group, the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army, or ARSA.</p> <p>The militant group, which staged a series of attacks against Myanmar security forces to protest the decades of persecution faced by the Rohingya, is trying to impose its own order on the camps. ARSA fighters say they, and not human rights workers or other civilians, have spiritual and political authority over the nearly one million refugees. But they also profit from the illicit trades that are thriving in the camps and have clashed with other criminal gangs, heightening the sense of lawlessness each time a body is found.</p> <p>Mr. Mohammed, whose community work has brought him into conflict with ARSA members, has repeatedly petitioned the Bangladeshi government and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. He is pleading to be relocated to a safe place.</p> <p>Mr. Mohammed has not left his tarpaulin shelter since Mohib Ullah, a fellow Rohingya community leader, was killed by gunmen in late September. His fear intensified after seven men associated with an Islamic school that had stood up to ARSA militants were shot and stabbed to death.</p>

The victims' families blame ARSA for their deaths, and men associated with the group have been arrested in connection with the killings. ARSA has said on social media that they did not carry out the killings.

Each time his family members venture out to the latrines, Mr. Mohammed worries. The worst, he said, is when darkness falls and Bangladeshi law enforcement exits the camps. Approaching footsteps, the soft slap of sandals on dirt lanes, fill him with terror.

"Please pray for me," Mr. Mohammed said. "I don't have other protection."

A month before his death, Mr. Mohib Ullah, who ran a human rights network to which Mr. Mohammed belonged, wrote to the authorities asking for sanctuary. He described in the letter, which was reviewed by The New York Times, how gunmen had warned that he and 70 other human rights defenders would be killed.

"I afraid too much because the ARSA group holding different kind of attacking tools which is very dangerous," Mr. Mohib Ullah wrote in English.

The authorities took no action. His killers yelled that they were the "leaders" of the camp, not Mr. Mohib Ullah, said his brother, who witnessed his death.

Johannes van der Klaauw, the U.N.H.C.R. representative in Bangladesh, acknowledged the dangers proliferating in the camps but noted that security was the responsibility of the Bangladeshis.

"Unfortunately, the killing of Mohib Ullah, but also the massacre at the madrasa, have now been a wake-up call for the authorities to really do something," he said.

The United Nations refugee agency said that it does not comment on individual cases. In a statement, it said some vulnerable Rohingya had been offered safety.

"We reiterate our call for the Bangladeshi authorities to take immediate measures to improve the security in the refugee camps," the statement said.

After Mr. Mohib Ullah's assassination, A.K. Abdul Momen, the Bangladeshi foreign minister, said that "the government of Bangladesh is committed to investigating into the heinous crime and bringing the killers to justice."

Oversight of the Rohingya camps has weakened during the coronavirus pandemic, as Covid protocols have kept humanitarian workers out. In the void, ARSA and other militants are waging a campaign of terror, demanding payments and recruits, according to camp residents who spoke with The Times.

"Why is my fate to be born a refugee?" said Saiful Arkane, an activist who is now in hiding with his two brothers and asking for refuge from the United Nations. "No one will give us protection."

Mr. Arkane and his brothers have worked for years documenting camp conditions. Despite pressure from other Rohingya to stay quiet about ARSA's growing strength, Mr. Arkane said that its fighters now openly run training centers in the camps, its funding padded by illicit activities, such as the drug trade. Some of the men who were killed at the madrasa had gone to the police to complain that ARSA wanted to use their seminary as one such training ground, according to two family members of the victims who spoke with The Times on the condition of anonymity.

Founded by Rohingya living outside of Myanmar, ARSA attacked Myanmar security posts in 2017, killing about a dozen people. The Myanmar military responded with disproportionate ferocity, in a frenzy of executions, rapes and village burnings. About three-quarters of a million Rohingya fled Myanmar to Bangladesh in a matter of weeks, the world's largest outpouring of refugees in a generation.

Bangladesh, which already was sheltering previous waves of Rohingya refugees, was inundated. One camp, Kutupalong, has 600,000 Rohingya living in an area less than 13 square kilometers, nine times as dense as the Gaza Strip. In Kutupalong and 33 other refugee settlements, the Rohingya have had to maintain their dignity amid landslides, fires, floods, marauding elephants, human trafficking and domestic abuse. Legally, they can neither work nor attend schools outside the camps.

Human rights groups acknowledge that the United Nations must tread carefully. It needs to encourage the Bangladesh government to impose law and order in the camps without alienating politicians who would rather see the Rohingya refugees and attendant foreign agencies depart the country.

The growing terror has resigned some Rohingya to a Bangladeshi plan to relocate part of the refugee population to Bhasan Char, a flood-prone island in the Bay of Bengal that human rights groups have called a floating prison. ARSA has less sway there.

In October, U.N.H.C.R. and Bangladesh signed a memorandum of understanding paving the way for 80,000 or so Rohingya to be transferred to Bhasan Char, on top of the 20,000 who have already been moved there.

Among the first to be resettled on Bhasan Char were Rohingya Christians, a persecuted minority within a persecuted minority. Rohingya Christians in the camps have been kidnapped, police reports have documented.

Last October, one of the Christian families, since relocated to the island, sought protection from the United Nations after ARSA militants threatened them with abduction.

The family was given refuge for one night in a U.N.H.C.R. safehouse near the camps but was ordered to leave the next day by Bangladeshi staff, two family members said. With nowhere to go, a relative, Abdu Taleb, helped them on a bus to escape the ARSA militants who were menacing outside.

The escape plan failed, according to a police report filed shortly after the incident. The militants boarded the bus and abducted Mr. Taleb and the family. Mr. Taleb and the male head of the family were held in a dark place for nearly four months, where he said the militants tortured them, pulling out one of his teeth.

From Bhasan Char, where he now lives in a barrack surrounded by the sea, Mr. Taleb said he was finally at peace.

“I came in search of safety,” Mr. Taleb said. “I found security.”

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HEADLINE	11/13 Teens’ racial hatred: bomb threats, swatting
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/nov/13/los-angeles-teens-swatting-attacks-black-lives-matter
GIST	<p>Authorities say three teenagers driven by racial hatred were behind hoax calls that brought major police responses to the home of a leading Black Lives Matter activist in Los Angeles.</p> <p>The teenagers, aged 13 to 16, connected over the Discord chat platform and are suspects in more than 30 bomb threats and so-called “swatting” incidents across the country, according to Los Angeles police.</p> <p>Swatting refers to a phony emergency call made to attract police to a particular address without cause.</p> <p>The teens are accused of perpetrating two fake swatting calls – one in September this year and one in August 2021 – at the home of Melina Abdullah, co-founder of BLM-LA and a Cal State Los Angeles professor.</p> <p>Police did not identify Abdullah by name as a victim of the teens, but listed her block as the location of two of the swatting incidents.</p>

	<p>Los Angeles police said the teens were behind hoaxes dating back to July 2020 that targeted “other online persons, video gamers, activists, schools, airports, houses of worship, entertainment venues and memorial parks”.</p> <p>Police will present a case to Los Angeles county prosecutors for criminal conspiracy and creating a false emergency charges and plan to request a hate crime enhancement in connection with the incidents at Abdullah’s home.</p> <p>“Some of the language used in the swatting incidents and a review of the subjects’ online activities reflect a racial motivation theme to a number of these swatting attacks,” police said in a news release.</p> <p>Two of the teenagers live in Ohio and New York, where authorities served search warrants on Tuesday. The third teenager is a US citizen in Cyprus.</p> <p>Abdullah, a prominent police critic, has condemned LAPD responses to her home which included armed Swat officers surrounding her house and ordering her to come outside through a loudspeaker. She has a pending lawsuit against the department for its actions during the swatting on 12 August 2020.</p> <p>Abdullah told the Los Angeles Times she doubted the LAPD’s information regarding the teenagers. She also said the teenagers’ alleged actions do not excuse the police officers’ tactics at her home.</p> <p>“Even if what they’re saying is true, the police – LAPD – used this opening as an opportunity to attempt to terrorize me and my family,” Abdullah said.</p> <p>Reached by the Associated Press, she said she would be putting out a statement on social media.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/13 Ploy: Puyallup ‘mall shooting’ diversion
SOURCE	https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/local/article255808911.html
GIST	<p>It wasn’t a mall shooting in Puyallup, though that’s what neighbors thought they were hearing at first.</p> <p>Instead, police responding to South Hill Mall shortly before 10 p.m. Saturday night discovered that a would-be thief apparently set off fireworks inside a store as a diversion to hide a robbery.</p> <p>No one was hurt in the incident, but multiple officers and firefighter teams responded to the scene, sirens howling.</p> <p>“Officers arrived to find a chaotic scene with individuals running from the location and the smoke-filled store,” a statement posted on the department’s Facebook page said. “Upon entry into the store, officers quickly confirmed an individual had lit off fireworks in an apparent attempt to create a diversion and steal merchandise from the store.”</p> <p>Police found “fireworks-related evidence” at the scene, but no shell casings or evidence to suggest a gun was used in the incident.</p> <p>The particular store was not identified, and it was not clear Saturday whether any merchandise was stolen. Police did not have a suspect in custody, according to the Facebook statement, but they were conducting witness interviews and gathering information.</p> <p>“No one appears to have been injured by this brazen act.,” the statement added. “There is no reason to believe that there is any concern of danger around the South Hill Mall.”</p>
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HEADLINE	11/14 Ecuador prison gangs clash; 68 dead
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/world/police-ecuadorian-prison-clash-leaves-at-least-52-dead/

QUITO, Ecuador (AP) — A prolonged gunbattle between rival gangs inside Ecuador's largest prison killed at least 68 inmates and wounded 25 on Saturday, while authorities said it took most of the day to regain control at the Litoral Penitentiary, which recently saw the country's worst prison bloodbath.

The killing erupted before dawn at the prison in the coastal city of Guayaquil in what officials said was the latest outbreak of fighting among prison gangs linked to international drug cartels. Videos circulating on social media showed bodies, some burned, lying on the ground inside the prison.

The shooting lasted around eight hours, officials said, and then new clashes were reported in part of the prison in the afternoon.

Presidential spokesman Carlos Jijón finally announced after nightfall that "the situation is controlled throughout the penitentiary." He said about 900 police officers had taken control of the situation.

In the initial fighting, inmates "tried to dynamite a wall to get into Pavilion 2 to carry out a massacre. They also burned mattresses to try to drown (their rivals) in smoke," said the governor of Guayas province, Pablo Arosemena.

"We are fighting against drug trafficking," Arosemena said. "It is very hard."

The bloodshed came less than two months after fighting among gangs killed 119 people at the prison, which houses more than 8,000 inmates.

Police commander Gen. Tanya Varela said early in the day that drones flown over the chaos revealed that inmates in three pavilions were armed with guns and explosives. Authorities have said that weapons and ammunition are smuggled into prisoners through vehicles that deliver supplies and sometimes by drones.

The prison violence comes amid a national state of emergency decreed by President Guillermo Lasso in October that empowers security forces to fight drug trafficking and other crimes.

On Saturday, Lasso tweeted that "the first right that we should guarantee should be the right to life and liberty, which isn't possible if security forces can't act to protect." He was referring the Constitutional Court's recent refusal to allow the military into prisons despite the state of emergency. Soldiers are currently outside the Litoral.

Ecuador's penitentiaries are seeing a wave of brutal violence.

The bloody fighting inside Litoral prison that killed 119 inmates in late September was described by authorities as the South American country's worst ever prison massacre. Officials said at least five of the dead were beheaded. Last February, 79 inmates were killed in simultaneous riots in various prisons. So far this year, more than 300 prisoners have died in clashes in penitentiaries across Ecuador.

Outside the prison, relatives of inmates gathered for news of their loved ones.

"Enough of this. When will they stop the killing? This is a prison not a slaughterhouse, they are human beings," said Francisca Chancay, whose brother has been in the prison for eight months.

Some called for Ecuador's military to take control of the prisons.

"What is Lasso waiting for? That there are more deaths?" said Maritza Vera, whose son is an inmate. "Have mercy, where are the human rights. We thought this was going to change, but it's worse."

Ecuador has about 40,000 inmates in its penitentiary system, which is far above the capacity of 30,000. Of this total, 15,000 have not been sentenced.

	<p>Arosemena said authorities in Ecuador will deal with the prison overcrowding by granting pardons, relocating inmates and transferring some foreign inmates back to their homelands.</p> <p>“There will be more than 1,000 pardons, but this is part of a process,” he said.</p> <p>The Guayas governor also said Ecuador will receive international aid from countries like Colombia, the United States, Israel and Spain to deal with the crisis in its prisons. The aid will be in resources and logistics.</p> <p>“For example, installing a freight scanner in the Guayaquil Penitentiary to avoid the entry of arms costs \$4 million,” said Arosemena.</p> <p>Vera said the situation is making the families of inmates desperate.</p> <p>“I feel sad and in anguish because there is too much death,” Vera said.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/12 Claim: crime falls as states relax gun laws
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/nation-politics/fact-check-the-claim-that-crime-falls-when-states-relax-gun-laws/
GIST	<p>“You think that in New York City, people should have considerable freedom to carry concealed weapons. I think that people of good moral character who start drinking a lot and who may be there for a football game or — or some kind of soccer game — can get pretty angry at each other, and if they each have a concealed weapon, who knows? And there are plenty of statistics in these briefs to show there’s some people who do know, and a lot of people end up dead, okay? . . . What are we supposed to say, in your opinion, that is going to be clear enough that we will not produce a kind of gun-related chaos?”</p> <p>— <i>Associate Justice Stephen G. Breyer, in a question to Paul D. Clement, attorney for gun-rights supporters, during oral argument before the U.S. Supreme Court in New York State Rifle & Pistol Association v. Bruen, Nov. 3, 2021</i></p> <p>— — —</p> <p>“So, Justice Breyer, I would sort of point you to two things that maybe would give you some comfort. I mean, one is the experience of the 43 states, and there are amicus briefs on both sides getting into the empirical evidence, but there really isn’t a case that those 43 states that include very large cities like Phoenix, like Houston, like Chicago — they have not had demonstrably worse problems with this than the five or six states that have the regime that New York has.”</p> <p>— <i>Clement</i></p> <p>— — —</p> <p>The Supreme Court is considering whether a gun-control law in New York unconstitutionally restricts the right to bear arms.</p> <p>At the heart of this case is a big question: Do Americans have a Second Amendment right to carry guns outside their homes? (The court ruled in 2008 and 2010 that Americans have a right to keep firearms within their homes.)</p> <p>New York is what’s known as a “may issue” state. Officials have latitude to approve or reject applicants seeking a permit to carry a concealed handgun. Seven other states have similar laws.</p> <p>The remaining 42 states don’t require permits, or they have “shall issue” laws, meaning officials have no discretion and must approve any applicant who meets the minimum legal requirements (for example, being above 21 years of age and having no felony convictions, pending charges or restraining orders in place).</p> <p>Which group of states is safer?</p> <p>This question has been the subject of a fierce academic debate since the late 1990s. One camp says “shall issue” states, with more permissive carrying laws, experience a drop in violent crime. Another group says the opposite: violence increases. Some researchers have found no effect. A fourth group says the existing</p>

data and methodologies are incapable of settling the question. More than two dozen studies have been published, with results all over the map.

Clement, a leading conservative lawyer who served as solicitor general of the United States, argued there was no real difference and pointed us to amicus briefs citing studies that found a decrease in crime or no effect from “shall issue” laws. “There really isn’t a case that those 43 states that include very large cities like Phoenix, like Houston, like Chicago – they have not had demonstrably worse problems with this than the five or six states that have the regime that New York has,” he told Breyer.

Gun violence is on the rise in the United States, where the rate of gun homicides is much higher than those of peer countries. This year is “on track to be the deadliest year of gun violence in more than two decades,” as noted by a legal brief filed by the police chiefs of 12 U.S. cities.

We’ll break down our analysis into three parts. First, some background on the case and the different kinds of laws in the states. Then, a comparison of homicide rates from 2016 through 2020 for all states, and for the four cities Clement mentioned. Last, we summarize some of the published research on all sides of the debate.

The legal landscape

All states have laws prohibiting people from carrying guns in public places, such as courthouses, banks, bars, churches, hospitals or schools, or at events, such as sports games or demonstrations. These restrictions vary by state.

Sixteen states do not require permits for people carrying handguns in permissible public places. In 34 states, those who wish to carry a handgun in permissible public places must get a permit from local or state officials, such as a police chief, sheriff or judge.

Twenty-six of those states have “shall issue” laws, which grant permits automatically to qualified applicants over age 21 (or 18 in some states when on active military duty). A typical example would be Nevada, which requires proof of firearms training and bans people convicted of felonies or any crime involving domestic violence or stalking, as well as medical-marijuana cardholders, parolees, fugitives, people declared mentally incompetent and those who were dishonorably discharged from the armed forces.

Eight states — California, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey and New York — have stricter, “may issue” laws. Even when applicants meet the minimum requirements, authorities may choose to deny concealed-carry permits based on the reasons given for needing a gun. New York requires applicants to demonstrate “proper cause,” which courts have defined as a “special or unique danger” that the general public doesn’t face.

In New Jersey, courts have held that the state’s requirement to show a “justifiable need” for a handgun permit means an urgent necessity for self-protection or an ever-present threat of danger. Gun rights advocates in the state complain that virtually no one can clear this bar, so the only people who routinely get handgun permits are retired law enforcement officers who had broad gun-carrying privileges while in service.

Enter Robert Nash and Brendan Koch. The two New York residents separately applied for concealed-carry permits. Nash cited “a string of recent robberies in his neighborhood and the fact that he had recently completed an advanced firearm safety training course,” and was denied a permit, according to the trial court. Koch cited “his extensive experience in the safe handling and operation of firearms and the many safety training courses he had completed,” but no cigar, either.

They’re now challenging the state’s “may issue” law at the Supreme Court. The court’s ruling in the case probably would apply to all states and not just New York.

The FBI crime data

We compared the 42 states that have “shall issue” laws or no permit requirements with the eight “may issue” states, looking at FBI Uniform Crime Reporting data for the five-year period from 2016 through 2020.

The eight states on average had lower homicide rates than the U.S. average all five years. In 2016, the eight-state average was 4.2 homicides per 100,000 people, and the U.S. average was 5.4 per 100,000. In 2020, the eight-state average was 4.9, compared with 6.5 for the entire country.

When comparing only the 50 states, excluding the District of Columbia and U.S. territories, the eight states with stricter gun-control laws still had lower homicide rates on average than the other 42.

We also compared the four cities Clement mentioned in his response to Breyer: Chicago, Houston, Phoenix and New York. Illinois became a “shall issue” state in 2014, and Chicago’s high crime rate cuts against Clement in a significant way.

New York City, the only one of the four in a “may issue” state, had the lowest homicide rate all five years. And it was a fraction of Chicago’s.

The FBI doesn’t publish city-level data, but the gun-control group Everytown for Gun Safety got it by matching figures from the FBI’s Supplementary Homicide Report to “places,” a term for cities used by the Census Bureau.

The last five years of data would seem to disprove Clement’s statement to Breyer, but did the “shall issue” laws have anything to do with the higher homicide rates, or was that due to other factors? The FBI cautions about its data: “Since crime is a sociological phenomenon influenced by a variety of factors, the FBI discourages ranking locations or making comparisons as a way of measuring law enforcement effectiveness.”

That’s usually where science comes in. Surely a researcher somewhere has discovered how to control for differences between states and has found a statistically sound method of settling this debate. Well, buckle up.

The published research

In 1997, researchers John R. Lott Jr. and David Mustard published an influential study finding that states saw reductions in violent crime after the adoption of “shall issue” laws and that up to 1,500 homicides a year could be prevented by adopting such measures.

The original study analyzed data from 1977 to 1992. Many states adopted “shall issue” laws afterward. Lott later published a book based on his research, “More Guns, Less Crime”; a third edition was released in 2010 with data from 1977 through 2005.

“There are large drops in overall violent crime, murder, rape, and aggravated assault that begin right after the right-to-carry laws have gone into effect. In all those crime categories, the crime rates consistently stay much lower than they were before the law,” Lott writes about the latest data through 2005. “The murder rate for these right-to-carry states fell consistently every year relative to non-right-to-carry states. When the laws were passed, the average murder rate in right-to-carry states was 6.3 per 100,000 people. By the first and second full years of the law it had fallen to 5.9. And by nine to ten years after the law, it had declined to 5.2.”

Lott’s research led to more research, including research into his research. Some academics were able to replicate his findings. Others analyzed the same data he used and came to the opposite conclusion: that violent crime rises. Some have found no significant effect.

The reason? Each study uses its own method of statistical analysis and its own mix of control variables. Although many of these methodologies are similar, and the data in many studies is the same, the results fall across the spectrum.

In an attempt to settle the debate, the National Research Council convened a committee of experts in the mid-2000s to analyze the competing studies. None of them was convincing, the panel said in its 2005 report, in part because minor adjustments to the researchers' variables or formulas would produce steeply different and strange results. (A separate task force convened by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services reached virtually the same conclusion in 2005.)

"We conclude that, in light of (a) the sensitivity of the empirical results to seemingly minor changes in model specification, (b) a lack of robustness of the results to the inclusion of more recent years of data (during which there are many more law changes than in the earlier period), and (c) the imprecision of some results, it is impossible to draw strong conclusions from the existing literature on the causal impact of these laws," the National Research Council report says. In a footnote, the report added that "the correctness of Lott's arguments is also an empirical question about which there is little evidence."

Since then, more research has been published, and papers keep landing on all sides of the debate.

"More recent research utilizing a longer time period, more control variables, and more advanced statistical methods suggests that permissive concealed carry laws significantly increase the homicide rate," said Emma E. Fridel, a criminologist at Florida State University who published one such study last year in *Justice Quarterly*. "My own study found that the firearms homicide rate increases by 10.8 percent in states with permitless carry or 'shall issue' laws, in comparison to 'may issue' states. This controls for a number of other confounding variables, including population size, socio-demographic characteristics, region, crime rates, mental health expenditures, alcohol consumption, etc., as well as levels of gun ownership and other gun laws."

A 2017 study in the *American Journal of Public Health* found that "'shall-issue' laws were significantly associated with 6.5% higher total homicide rates, 8.6% higher firearm homicide rates, and 10.6% higher handgun homicide rates, but were not significantly associated with long-gun or nonfirearm homicide," based on data from 1991 to 2015.

A 2018 analysis in *Econ Journal Watch* (critiquing another study) found "there is no evidence that the RTC [right-to-carry, or 'shall issue'] laws have increased crime. That finding is a negative and agnostic one, and it is in line with what the NRC concluded in 2005." Another study the same year in *Empirical Economics* found that "although the passage of right-to-carry laws has no significant effects on the overall violent or property crime rates, they lead to short-term increases in robbery and medium-term decreases in murder rates" after five years.

A 2019 study led by researcher John J. Donohue III of Stanford Law School in the *Journal of Empirical Legal Studies* analyzed data from 1977 through 2014 and found that "shall issue" laws "are associated with 13-15 percent higher aggregate violent crime rates 10 years after adoption."

Daniel W. Webster, director of the Johns Hopkins Center for Gun Violence Prevention and Policy, said he and his colleagues are working on a new study "that focuses more precisely on all forms of violent crimes committed with firearms, provides a more nuanced examination of a spectrum of conditions states require in order to issue permits to carry concealed guns, and new statistical methods for estimating the policies' effects."

"I can't share the details now, but I will simply say that our findings are consistent with much of the latest research on the policy question," Webster said. "While there are differences across states, on average, moving from may- to shall-issue for concealed carry leads to more gun violence."

We reached out to all the living members of the National Research Council committee listed in the 2005 report. What do they think now?

"To be honest — I would still draw the same conclusion that the NRC panel came to in 2004: that there is no clear-cut answer," Karen Norberg, a psychiatrist and researcher at the National Bureau of Economic

Research, said in an email after reviewing the latest literature at our prompting. “The bottom line is still that results are very sensitive to small variations in the data and the statistical models. No simple answers.”

This was a common refrain from researchers in this camp.

“Unfortunately, what I concluded after three years on the NRC panel evaluating shall-carry legislation was that the data are not up to the task of informing us with science, and therefore decisions about ‘shall carry’ will have to remain in the realm of politics,” said Terrie E. Moffitt, a psychologist at Duke University. “Generally, our NRC panel found that when scientists had tried to make these comparisons, the differences they found were very small. And the differences could easily be made to come and go with statistical sleight of hand. Thus, two different scientists could use the same data set of counties and come up with opposing conclusions.”

“Imagine a question such as, does the COVID vaccine work?” Moffitt added. “It is not informative to test this on a sample of two or three people, or even 100 people, because there are so many other factors operating to influence the outcome that you need a very large number of people to wash those other factors out. . . . This has got to be tested in thousands of people. Same with gun laws. But, in that realm, we only have 50 states as our units of analysis. Or maybe 3,000 counties. Making this worse, the outcome, which is gun-related-crimes, is not as common as you might think, so we are stuck with small numbers to count as the outcome.”

Joel Waldfogel, an economist now at the University of Minnesota, said: “My sense at the time was that the available evidence on whether ‘shall issue’ laws reduce crime was fragile. It was easy to change the number of years considered in the study, etc., and see the results change. . . . The available evidence did not allow us to draw a conclusion about whether such laws had a detectable, or demonstrable, effect.”

In fact, there’s another survey of studies devoted to how “uncertain” and “inconclusive” this entire body of knowledge remains. The Rand Corp. published it last year.

“Our conclusion was that there is ‘limited’ evidence that ‘shall issue’ laws may increase violent crime, but their effects on homicides and other specific violent crimes is ‘uncertain,’ ” said Andrew R. Morral, a senior behavioral scientist at Rand. “Uncertain does not mean these laws have no effect on these outcomes, it means the research that has been done to date is not sufficiently strong as to be able to determine the size or direction of any such effects.

“Our conclusions are a narrow assessment of the causal effects of these laws, a question that is very hard to study precisely. On a more general, and non-causal level, it may be relevant to your reporting to note that people living in the states with ‘shall issue’ laws are murdered at rates about 40% higher than those living in states with ‘may issue’ laws. We cannot say this difference is due to concealed-carry laws in particular.”

In sum, proving with scientific rigor that “shall issue” laws cause violent crime to rise or fall is a tricky business, but a simple comparison of the data shows that states with looser gun-permit laws have, in fact, experienced higher or “demonstrably worse” homicide rates, as we noted above using five years of FBI data.

We sent questions to Clement and he responded with links to two amicus briefs submitted in the case, both of them basing their arguments on Lott’s research or similar studies that found a decrease in crime or no effect. One brief was submitted by William English, a Georgetown University business professor, and the Center for Human Liberty. The other was submitted by the Republican attorneys general of 26 states. (Neither brief supported Clement’s comparison of Chicago, Houston, Phoenix and New York.) In response to our questions, Lott said “none of the results claiming a bad effect account for the huge differences in the percent of the population with concealed handgun permits.”

“For example, you have Illinois at 4% and Indiana at over 20%, but because it is so costly to get a permit in Illinois, you overwhelmingly have wealthy whites who live in the suburbs getting permits,” Lott said.

“In Indiana, many more people who live in poor, heavily minority zip codes have permits. My research shows that you will get a much greater reduction in crime in areas where the people who are by far the most likely victims of violent crime get permits.”

“The rules to get permits do matter,” Lott writes in his book. “One important pattern stands out. . . . The states that have passed concealed-handgun permits most recently have made it much more difficult to obtain a permit, and therefore should issue fewer permits overall than states that passed the laws earlier. Later-adopting states had, on average, higher fees for getting a permit (even adjusted for inflation), longer training hours, and older minimum required ages. From the 1980s on, the late-adopting states also have permits with shorter durations.”

He added: “There are two central questions here: 1) Do concealed handgun permit holders themselves cause problems? Do they commit crime? 2) What is the statistical research on the impact of concealed handgun laws? While there is a debate over Question 2, there is no debate over Question 1. You can’t point to any peer-reviewed academic research showing that permit holders are a risk for firearms-related violations. None.”

A 2013 study in the American Journal of Public Health analyzed Texas data from 2001 to 2009 and found that permit-holders “were much less likely than nonlicensees to be convicted of crimes” but that the convictions for the permit-holders “were more likely to involve lower-prevalence crimes, such as sexual offenses, gun offenses, or offenses involving a death.”

— — —
Well, that was a fun fact check.

What we know is the places with looser concealed-carry laws — the “shall issue” and no-permit states — had a higher homicide rate on average during a recent five-year period (2016-2020) than the eight states with stricter permit laws. New York City had a lower homicide rate than the three “shall issue” cities Clement mentioned. Chicago’s homicide rate was five times that of New York last year. That’s the definition of “demonstrably worse.” Clement earns Three Pinocchios.

What role the “shall issue” laws played in these higher crime rates, if any, is unclear. We won’t attempt to settle the academic debate over all the competing studies. The most responsible, factual course would be to acknowledge all the published research rather than cherry-pick from the most favorable studies, as some amicus briefs on both sides of this case do.

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HEADLINE	11/13 Seattle shootings, gun violence rise
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/seattle-shootings-gun-violence/281-9fde2dcf-83a1-43ea-ae94-6b84f45ce890
GIST	<p>SEATTLE - Following a historically violent year in 2020 despite the COVID-19 pandemic keeping most individuals indoors, Seattle is on track for over 100 more shootings in 2021.</p> <p>In all of 2020, the city had 438 shooting incidents, including 99 non-fatal injury shootings and 23 homicides.</p> <p>From January through October in 2021, Seattle has already seen 509 shooting incidents, with 120 non-fatal injury shootings and 29 homicides. The same timeframe last year saw 370 shooting incidents.</p> <p>It’s already the most shooting incidents the city has seen annually in the last decade, according to the Seattle Police Department’s (SPD) data.</p> <p>The rising gun violence isn’t just a local issue, but a regional and even national problem that has run parallel to other upheavals and crises like the protests against police violence and the COVID-19 pandemic.</p>

	<p>In October, data from the King County Sheriff's Department showed shootings were up 50% compared to the yearly average from the previous four years.</p> <p>As for Seattle, whose spike in gun violence comes amidst efforts to defund SPD, the issue has drawn pleas for more police funding and more funds for community organizations looking to curb the crisis.</p> <p>A group of nonprofits combatting gun violence in youth in October asked for millions of dollars more in funding, saying they wanted the county to treat the problem with the same urgency as COVID-19.</p> <p>For those who argue crime is rising in general as the pandemic wanes and more places open up, the data for Seattle at least doesn't support it.</p> <p>Looking at the number of violent and property crimes altogether, the numbers are high for 2021 but not significantly higher than in previous years.</p> <p>Notably, the number of arson is comparatively high with 195 so far in 2021, which is already higher than the 171 arson incidents last year. The third-highest number of arsons annually for Seattle came in 2009 and again in 2017.</p> <p>According to SPD's heat map, the areas most affected by the wave in gun violence are north Seattle, specifically Northgate, Bitter Lake and Lake City, and the Rainier Valley area.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/13 Hit-run shooting Normandy Park; arrest
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/police-investigating-hit-and-run-shooting-normandy-park/Q7HRUNZV25BZHMP6VTXBWLT6L/
GIST	<p>NORMANDY PARK, Wash. — Police are investigating a hit-and-run and shooting in Normandy Park late Friday night.</p> <p>Officers responded around 10 p.m. to a hit-and-run crash near the 16400 block of 1st Avenue South.</p> <p>The victim attempted to follow the suspect car in an effort to get the license plate number, according to a Facebook post from the Normandy Park Police Department.</p> <p>Police said that as the cars crossed Normandy Road, the suspect car fired a gun at the victim car multiple times.</p> <p>The victim then stopped following the suspect and the suspect drove quickly away, the post said.</p> <p>The suspect then crashed in the 19800 block of 1st Avenue South.</p> <p>The driver tried to flee on foot as two passengers were trapped inside the car. Officers quickly apprehended the driver.</p> <p>Fire medics freed the two passengers who were taken to the hospital with possibly serious injuries.</p> <p>Police found two guns inside the car.</p> <p>The driver is under arrest for investigation of a hit-and-run, driving under the influence and reckless endangerment, the Facebook post said.</p> <p>Police will also pursue charges against the passenger after he is released from the hospital.</p> <p>The victim was uninjured. Police are continuing to investigate.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/13 Pierce Co. auto thefts on rise: too easy
SOURCE	https://www.q13fox.com/news/pcsd-pierce-co-crooks-are-getting-away-auto-theft-easily-as-number-of-stolen-cars-rises
GIST	<p>BUCKLEY, Wash. - "It's kind of that gut-wrenching feeling that you know they came into your personal world and your personal bubble and they got off scot-free, it's very sickening helpless feeling."</p> <p>It was around 5:30 am when Chanz Robinson and his wife heard his trucks engine turn on, and realized someone was stealing it.</p> <p>"I grabbed my concealed weapon and took off in my vehicle and pursued after them."</p> <p>Robinson sped off behind the thief, while calling 911 to give officers the car's location.</p> <p>"The cop got behind them, they ended up speeding up, with the new pursuit laws they couldn't chase them so they ended up losing the vehicle."</p> <p>In Washington State, a new law passed this year prevents officers from chasing a car just because it's stolen. Vehicle pursuits are now reserved only for crimes that pose a public safety risk. If a cop tries to pull someone in a stolen car over and the driver doesn't stop, the cop has to let him go.</p> <p>So Robinson took things into his own hands, taking to social media asking for people to be on the lookout for his truck, and it worked. The next day he got a tip about its location. But when deputies arrived, all but one suspect got away, and deputies felt there wasn't enough evidence to arrest him. But even if they did, it wouldn't have made much of a difference.</p> <p>"When we arrest someone for stealing a car or being in possession of a stolen vehicle, right now you get released on the scene, so we have thieves that get caught multiple times in a row and they continue to commit the same crimes over and over again," says Sgt. Darren Moss of the Pierce County Sheriff's Department.</p> <p>Sgt. Moss says that's part of a policy to try to keep the jail population low during the pandemic. But he also says it's undoubtedly contributing to the spike in theft. Last month alone, 796 cars were stolen, which is more than double that same time last year.</p> <p>Robinson says he knows officers hands are tied. "It's just frustrating because they can't do anything so we took it upon ourselves to do it and you're going to see a lot of more of basically a vigilante upbringing if the laws continue to stay where they're at."</p> <p>Robinson got his truck back, but he doesn't feel much better about the ordeal. "I would've preferred to see justice be served rather than have my truck back to be honest."</p>
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HEADLINE	11/12 Moses Lake man arrested: child porn
SOURCE	https://www.ncwlife.com/moses-lake-man-arrested-on-multiple-child-porn-charges/
GIST	<p>A Moses Lake man faces multiple child pornography charges after his home was raided Wednesday.</p> <p>The arrest stems from an initial investigation by the Othello Police Department that eventually involved numerous local, county, state and federal officials.</p> <p>Arrested at his home in the 6800 block of Bacon Lane N.E. was Dustin L. Blaske, 37. He is currently lodged in the Grant County Jail.</p>

	<p>He faces charges of first- and second-degree dealing in depictions of minors engaged in sexually explicit conduct; and first-and second-degree possession of depictions of minors engaged in sexually explicit conduct.</p> <p>Multiple agencies helped serve the search warrant Wednesday, Othello police said.</p> <p>The department offered its thanks to the Spokane County Sheriff's Office, Grant County Sheriff's Office, Washington State Patrol Missing and Exploited Children Task Force, Seattle Police Department Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force, Homeland Security Investigations, and the Washington State Liquor & Cannabis Board.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/12 Haiti slides deeper into chaos
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/haiti-slides-deeper-into-chaos-a-month-after-missionaries-kidnapping-11636718401?mod=lead_feature_below_a_pos1
GIST	<p>Haiti is sliding deeper into chaos, as mass kidnappings escalate and gangs become powerful enough to blackmail the government and choke the impoverished nation's struggling economy.</p> <p>Nearly a month after a group of 17 American and Canadian missionaries and their families were abducted in Haiti, negotiations to free the hostages drag on. The extended captivity of the missionaries, a group that includes an infant and four other children, has added to a growing sense of anarchy in the country of 11 million.</p> <p>On Wednesday, armed men stopped a bus carrying 52 people near the capital, killed a police officer traveling on board, and held an undetermined number of people hostage, according to Mehu Changeux, the head of Haiti's association of owners and drivers. He later said the hostages were released on Thursday after being held overnight.</p> <p>The U.S. State Department is urging Americans in Haiti to leave now on commercial flights, saying the U.S. might not be able to help them depart if commercial flights become unavailable. Late last week, it warned that the security situation in the country was deteriorating. "Kidnapping is widespread and victims regularly include U.S. citizens," it said.</p> <p>Gangs control an estimated half of the capital and surrounding areas, according to security analysts and local human rights groups. They are increasingly flaunting their power in the face of a weak government hobbled by the July assassination of President Jovenel Moïse. Prime Minister Ariel Henry is leading a caretaker government.</p> <p>People aren't the only ones being held hostage. Shortly after the kidnapping of the missionaries, the country's most powerful gang—run by Jimmy "Barbecue" Cherizier, a former policeman—blocked access to the main fuel terminal in the capital of Port-au-Prince, causing widespread fuel shortages. The G9 gang is demanding money and the resignation of Mr. Henry in exchange for releasing the fuel. Mr. Henry has said he won't negotiate with gangs and he hasn't resigned.</p> <p>Major hospitals say they are reducing operations because of the fuel shortages. Most schools, banks and other businesses are now open just three days a week. Some media outlets began to suspend their programming amid the scarcity. Streets in Port-au-Prince look almost empty, residents say.</p> <p>"The streets are a bit deserted because people cannot find fuel, the population is very upset about its future," said Noces Debreus, an editor for Le National newspaper. He said distribution of the paper may be interrupted if the crisis persists.</p> <p>Haiti's economy is expected to shrink 2.3% this year, which would be the third annual contraction in a row, according to the central bank. Many economists expect inflation to hit 20% by year's end, partly driven by the fuel shortage.</p>

“The country is paralyzed. It’s very difficult to move goods because of the gangs,” says Kesner Pharel, a Haitian economist and head of Groupe Croissance, which monitors the country’s economy.

On Friday, Mr. Cherizier announced at a press conference a one-week truce to allow tank truckers to load fuel again at the terminal, in a new display of power from the person many already consider to be the real powerbroker in Haiti. Hours later, the national association of oil-products distributors confirmed the fuel depot had reopened.

The continuing chaos most likely will fuel more migration to the U.S., immigration experts say. The U.S. Coast Guard intercepted in late September some 400 Haitians traveling in two overloaded boats on their way to Florida. Some 1,500 Haitians were detained at sea while heading to the U.S. in fiscal year 2021, which ended in September, more than triple the number during the previous year.

“There is no doubt that migration is going to become a huge deal in the decade ahead,” said Jocelyn McCalla, a Haitian migration expert.

The U.S. has provided financial assistance to Haiti for years, and the Biden administration has committed more funds since Mr. Moïse’s assassination, Haitian officials say. But President Biden [has ruled out any military intervention](#) to help restore order.

Mr. Moïse [was killed in murky circumstances](#) and the case remains open. His death created a political vacuum that benefited criminal gangs, which control large parts of the capital.

Mr. Henry, a neurosurgeon, took the helm as acting prime minister, with the main goal of organizing new elections, but his government is widely seen as weak.

For ordinary Haitians, the depressing economic struggles are now mixed with the terror of a wave of kidnappings like that of the missionaries, who were taken Oct. 16 on the outskirts of Port-au-Prince.

Kidnappers have regularly provided “proof of life” of the missionaries and their families, said a high-ranking police officer who spoke on condition of anonymity. The kidnappers [have demanded \\$1 million for each hostage](#), Haitian officials have said.

“It takes time to resolve a hostage-taking situation, this is a complex situation,” Frantz Elbé, Haiti’s police chief, said in an interview. He declined to give specific details on the negotiations.

The abductions are causing long-lasting psychological damage, victims and families say, in addition to financially wiping out those who pay the ransoms. And in an ominous sign for Haiti’s future, kidnappers have targeted some of its most-talented citizens, from lawyers, scientists and doctors to university professors, potentially fueling a brain drain from the country.

Abbias Edumé, a 45-year-old highly regarded law professor and former prosecutor, was abducted in February. As he was driving to a pharmacy on a sunny morning near the national palace, he found the road blocked by a car. Four young men armed with Kalashnikov rifles forced him into their vehicle.

“Please, don’t do this,” Mr. Edumé remembers telling his kidnappers, who threw a bag over his head. Mr. Edumé said his lone thought at that moment was, “My God, my God! This is what a kidnapping looks like.”

He was driven to an unknown location, where he spent nine days in a small cell. Three gangsters armed with rifles guarded him. He was routinely hit on the neck, back and abdomen, and he couldn’t change clothing during his captivity.

One day, one of his abductors put a gun to Mr. Edumé’s head, yelling that if Mr. Edumé’s family didn’t pay a ransom, he would kill him.

	<p>“I saw death in front of me like an object I could touch, I felt death, I prepared for it, I demanded death to come and take me. I couldn’t bear it anymore,” he said.</p> <p>Students of Mr. Edumé, who taught environmental law at the University of Port-au-Prince, demonstrated in the capital during the nine days he was held hostage.</p> <p>Mr. Edumé’s elder brother finally paid a ransom, an amount Mr. Edumé declines to disclose. “They paid all the savings we had, my family has nothing now,” he said.</p> <p>Mr. Edumé remains traumatized by the experience. He quit his job and regularly visits a psychologist. “I’m afraid of leaving my house. I live like in a prison,” he said.</p> <p>Now, he just thinks about migrating to the U.S., whatever it takes. “There is no future for no one in Haiti,” he said.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/12 Army vet pleads guilty: armed, Capitol riot
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/legal-issues/molotov-cocktail-guilty-plea-capitol-attack/2021/11/12/c8aa6434-43c7-11ec-9ea7-3eb2406a2e24_story.html
GIST	<p>The most heavily armed man federal authorities charged in the Jan. 6 investigation faces years in prison after pleading guilty Friday to bringing five loaded firearms and 11 molotov cocktails in his truck to Capitol Hill.</p> <p>Lonnie Leroy Coffman, 71, of Falkville, Ala., admitted to one federal count of possessing an unregistered firearm or destructive device — the molotov cocktails — and one D.C. count of carrying a pistol without a license. He was the first person indicted in the pro-Trump protests that devolved into violence against nearly 140 police officers and forced the evacuation of Congress as it met to confirm the 2020 presidential election results.</p> <p>Coffman packed a cooler with Mason jars he filled with gasoline and melted plastic foam to produce a dangerous “napalm-like” explosion of sticky, flammable liquid, he admitted in a two-hour plea hearing in Washington.</p> <p>In his red GMC Sierra truck, the Army veteran also brought a rifle, shotgun, two 9mm pistols and a .22-caliber pistol — all loaded — and carried two of the pistols with him as he walked, he admitted.</p> <p>“Do you agree with those parts you could make a molotov cocktail at the time you were putting them together? ... When you got to Washington, D.C., you still knew all those ingredients could be put together to make a molotov cocktail, is that correct?” U.S. District Judge Colleen Kollar-Kotelly asked.</p> <p>“Yes, your honor,” Coffman said.</p> <p>Coffman denied any intent to use the devices, adding that he believed the three-year-old gasoline in the jars “was not deadly anymore” and may not have exploded.</p> <p>U.S. prosecutors agreed to drop the rest of a 17-count indictment, all local charges for violating District gun and ammunition laws.</p> <p>Coffman faces 37 to 46 months in prison under nonbinding federal guidelines at sentencing on April 1 in a plea deal. His defense and prosecutors may argue for more or less time, and the government may seek an upper-end sentence claiming that Coffman’s offense qualified for a terrorism enhancement, intending to intimidate or retaliate the government, Kollar-Kotelly said.</p>

	<p>In a related Alabama case, Coffman also pleaded guilty before Kollar-Kotelly to a second federal count for making 12 similar improvised explosive devices using Mason jars found at his home, carrying the same advisory sentencing range.</p> <p>Friday's hearing shed no further light on why Coffman came to the Capitol so heavily armed or whether he acted alone. Kollar-Kotelly hinted she would be interested in learning about his intent at sentencing.</p> <p>According to charging papers, police spotted weapons in Coffman's parked truck in the 300 block of First Street SE while searching an area of Capitol Hill that had been sealed off because unexploded pipe bombs had been reported near the headquarters of the Republican and Democratic parties minutes before the mob assault began about 1 p.m.</p> <p>No arrests related to the pipe bombs have been made. Coffman was arrested while returning to his truck.</p> <p>In detaining Coffman pending trial early in the case, Kollar-Kotelly cited evidence by federal prosecutors that Coffman had potential plans to coordinate with others and was prepared for political violence.</p> <p>Coffman approached the Washington home and office of Sen. Ted Cruz (R-Tex.) weeks earlier to discuss "election fraud" and previously joined an armed-citizen camp at the Texan border, prosecutors alleged in court filings.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/12 Pardoned: wrongfully imprisoned 24yrs
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/12/us/pardon-north-carolina-compensation.html
GIST	<p>Gov. Roy Cooper of North Carolina on Friday granted a pardon to a man who spent more than 24 years in prison for murder before a judge vacated his conviction in 2019, finding that a key witness had "entirely made up" her testimony.</p> <p>The pardon for the man, Montoyae Dontae Sharpe, clears the way for him to seek compensation from the state and comes after prominent pastors and others had demonstrated outside the governor's mansion in support of Mr. Sharpe.</p> <p>"It's been a long time coming," Mr. Sharpe, 46, of Charlotte, said in an interview on Friday. "My name has been cleared, and me and my family can move on. And I can go on with the next stage of my life, which is to still help other guys behind me."</p> <p>In 1995, Mr. Sharpe was convicted and sentenced to life in prison for the murder of George Radcliffe, who was found fatally shot in his pickup truck in Greenville, N.C., on Feb. 11, 1994.</p> <p>During the trial, Charlene Johnson, who was 15, testified that she saw Mr. Sharpe, who is Black, shoot Mr. Radcliffe, who was white, in a face-to-face altercation over a drug deal, according to one of Mr. Sharpe's lawyers, Theresa A. Newman, who was a co-director of the Wrongful Convictions Clinic at Duke University School of Law.</p> <p>Ms. Johnson testified that Mr. Sharpe and another man then put Mr. Radcliffe into the truck, crashed it into a vacant lot and threw away the key, Ms. Newman said.</p> <p>Ms. Johnson recanted her testimony weeks later, and Mr. Sharpe's efforts to overturn his conviction worked their way through the courts until 2019, when a Superior Court judge in Pitt County, N.C., held two evidentiary hearings that destroyed the case.</p> <p>After the second hearing, on Aug. 22, 2019, the judge, G. Bryan Collins Jr., found that if the case were tried again, Ms. Johnson would testify that "she was not present at the time of the shooting and that her trial testimony was entirely made up based on what she saw on television and what investigators told her."</p> <p>Judge Collins also found that the medical examiner who had testified at the trial, Dr. Mary Gilliland, learned of Ms. Johnson's testimony only "well after the trial was over." If Dr. Gilliland were called to</p>

testify at a retrial, the judge found, she would testify that Ms. Johnson's initial description of the shooting was "medically and scientifically impossible."

Mr. Radcliffe had been shot in the arm, and Ms. Johnson's description of a face-to-face confrontation "didn't line up with the trajectory of the bullet through the body," Ms. Newman said.

Judge Collins vacated Mr. Sharpe's conviction, released him from prison and granted his motion for a new trial.

That same day, the Pitt County District Attorney's Office dismissed the murder charge against Mr. Sharpe and refused to retry the case on the grounds that there was insufficient evidence to prove it beyond a reasonable doubt.

Mr. Sharpe then spent the next two years fighting for a pardon, Ms. Newman said, before Mr. Cooper granted it on Friday.

"I have carefully reviewed Montoyae Dontae Sharpe's case and am granting him a Pardon of Innocence," Mr. Cooper, a Democrat, said in a statement. "Mr. Sharpe and others who have been wrongly convicted deserve to have that injustice fully and publicly acknowledged."

Ms. Newman said the pardon would allow Mr. Sharpe to petition the state for compensation of \$50,000 for each year of wrongful imprisonment up to \$750,000 — the most Mr. Sharpe could receive for the 24 years he spent in prison.

Mr. Sharpe said he had been sustained throughout the decades by his faith in God, his lawyers, the pastors who supported him and his mother, who gave him the strength to resist pressure from prosecutors to accept plea deals that could have resulted in his release from prison.

"If it weren't for them, it would have been bad," Mr. Sharpe said. "I would have still been in there, most likely."

At [a rally](#) outside the governor's mansion on Friday, the Rev. Dr. William J. Barber II, a North Carolina pastor, celebrated the "tremendous, tremendous news" of Mr. Sharpe's pardon and asked those in attendance to think of all those who fought for Mr. Sharpe throughout the years.

"This was a family victory," Dr. Barber said, adding that Mr. Sharpe deserved special praise.

"He has more courage than any man that has ever sat in that governor's office — or woman — and more courage than anybody that's ever sat in the state Legislature," Dr. Barber said.

Mr. Sharpe said he hoped to use his pardon to fight for others who have been wrongfully convicted and are seeking to clear their names.

"I know there are more cases out there like mine because the system isn't perfect," he said. "We can change the system and my case is just a steppingstone for me to step out and help change the system."

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HEADLINE	11/12 Julian Assange to wed in British prison
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/12/world/europe/julian-assange-stella-moris-marriage.html
GIST	<p>LONDON — Julian Assange, the WikiLeaks founder who is fighting extradition to the United States on espionage charges, has been granted permission to marry in London in the prison where he has been held since 2019.</p> <p>The news that Mr. Assange would be allowed to wed his fiancée, Stella Moris, in Belmarsh Prison was announced by Ms. Moris on Thursday, only days after she said she had taken legal action against the British government for ignoring the couple's repeated requests to marry.</p>

“I am relieved but still angry that legal action was necessary to put a stop to the illegal interference with our basic right to marry,” Ms. Moris [wrote on Twitter](#).

A prison spokesman confirmed in a statement that Mr. Assange had been given permission to marry, and that his application was received by the prison governor in “the usual way” and was processed “as for any other prisoner.”

Under the [Marriage Act 1983](#), prisoners in England are entitled to apply to be married while in custody. If the application is granted, the prisoner’s family is responsible for paying for the service.

Mr. Assange and Ms. Moris are no strangers to seizing life in confined spaces.

In 2012, Mr. Assange took refuge in the Ecuadorean Embassy in London as he was fighting extradition to Sweden, where he was wanted for questioning in a rape inquiry, [which was later dropped](#). Ms. Moris was hired as part of the legal team fighting those extradition efforts, and during the seven years he was holed up in the embassy, she and Mr. Assange developed a relationship and had two children.

“While for many people it would seem insane to start a family in that context, for us, it was the sane thing to do,” she said in a video posted last year to the [WikiLeaks YouTube channel](#). “To break down those walls around him and see life, imagine a life, beyond that prison.”

Ms. Moris, who is originally from South Africa, says that her husband watched their sons, Gabriel and Max, being born on a video call. The boys are British citizens and have grown up visiting their father in prison, according to Ms. Moris.

Mr. Assange, 50, [was indicted by the United States in 2019](#) on 17 counts of violating the Espionage Act after he published documents related to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan that had been leaked by [the former Army intelligence analyst Chelsea Manning](#). That June, Mr. Assange was evicted from the Ecuadorean Embassy, [arrested by the British police](#) and taken to Belmarsh, in southeast London, where he has remained in custody.

Ms. Moris had been silent about her relationship and her family with Mr. Assange until March 2020, when she testified before a British court about his deteriorating mental health, according to court documents. Ever since, she has made repeated public requests that the charges against him be dropped and that he be granted a presidential pardon.

Mr. Assange’s wedding announcement comes only weeks after proceedings for his extradition resumed in a London court. Lawyers for the United States have argued that he should stand trial in an American court, despite continuing concerns about his mental health. Numerous doctors and mental health experts have chronicled the decline of [Mr. Assange’s physical and mental state](#) while in confinement.

“He is extremely thin, and it’s really taking a toll on him,” Ms. Moris said on Tuesday in an [interview with Democracy Now](#) about Mr. Assange’s well-being. “Every day is a struggle, you can just imagine. There is no end in sight.”

The WikiLeaks founder has sought for years to avoid a trial in the United States on charges that his supporters say are politically driven and an attack on media freedom. If Mr. Assange is extradited and found guilty, he could face up to 175 years in prison in America.

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HEADLINE	11/12 SPD: 2 shot trying to aid woman in assault
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/law-justice/2-men-shot-critically-wounded-on-beacon-hill-after-intervening-when-they-saw-a-woman-being-assaulted-seattle-police-say/

GIST	<p>Two men were shot in a parking lot Thursday night on Beacon Hill after they reportedly saw a man assaulting a woman and tried to intervene, according to Seattle police.</p> <p>Shortly before 10 p.m., police received a report of a shooting in a parking lot in the 1600 block of South Columbian Way.</p> <p>Police said the victims — who are 47 and 38 years old — had been at an encampment near Beacon Avenue South when a Honda Civic pulled up on the street near them.</p> <p>The two victims saw the male driver in the Honda hitting a female passenger, police said, and approached the car to check on the woman.</p> <p>When they did so, the driver reportedly pulled out a gun and fired, striking the victims, police said.</p> <p>The suspect sped away and a relative of one of the victims drove the men to Harborview Medical Center. According to police, both victims sustained life-threatening injuries.</p> <p>Detective are asking people with information about the case to call the SPD Violent Crimes Tip Line at 206-233-5000.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/11 Charge: pair stole \$1M jobless benefits
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/business/seattle-pair-charged-with-stealing-1-million-in-jobless-benefits-small-business-loans/
GIST	<p>Two Seattle residents have been charged with stealing more than \$1 million in jobless benefits and federal small business loans during the pandemic.</p> <p>Bryan Alan Sparks, 40, and Autumn Gail Luna, 22, were charged Wednesday with stealing at least \$500,000 in jobless benefits from the state Employment Security Department (ESD) and \$520,000 Small Business Administration loans, according to a 16-count indictment filed in U.S. District Court.</p> <p>The jobless benefits charge appears to be the largest uncovered so far, in dollar terms, arising from the \$650 million wave of unemployment fraud that struck Washington last year.</p> <p>The pair were arrested June 22 in Washington, D.C., with cocaine, heroin and methamphetamine, according to the U.S. Attorney's Office in Seattle.</p> <p>Prosecutors say that from March 2020 through at least January 2021, the pair used stolen Social Security numbers and other personal information to file fraudulent jobless claims and apply for federal Economic Injury Disaster Loans.</p> <p>As part of the scheme, Sparks and Luna used more than a dozen cellphones and addresses in Seattle, Des Moines, Federal Way, Auburn, and Lynnwood, among other places, prosecutors said.</p> <p>Sparks and Luna had proceeds mailed to those addresses or deposited in bank accounts opened using stolen personal information, prosecutors say. Other individuals also may have been involved in the fraud, according to the indictment.</p> <p>Sparks and Luna are charged with conspiracy, mail fraud, wire fraud, and aggravated identity theft. It wasn't clear whether Sparks and Luna had an attorney.</p> <p>The indictments are the latest in last year's massive fraud, when criminals exploited emergency federal pandemic relief programs.</p>

	<p>In September, Reyes De La Cruz III, a former ESD employee, was charged with stealing at least \$360,000 in jobless benefits.</p> <p>In May, federal investigators charged Abidemi Rufai, of Lekki, Nigeria, with stealing more than \$350,000 in benefits. A month later, federal prosecutors charged Chukwuemeka Onyegbula, a Nigerian IT engineer, with stealing roughly \$290,000 in benefits from ESD and from other states.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/11 Thurston Co. deputies seize \$1.2M drugs
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/south-sound-news/12-million-drugs-seized-thurston-county-rest-stop/Y5OZFTJGAVE63KNSI7XOD4KU64/
GIST	<p>Three people idling in a rental car at a Thurston County rest stop led to their arrest and seizures of \$90,000 and \$1.2 million in illegal drugs, according to the Thurston County Sheriff's Office.</p> <p>On Nov. 8, officers spotted three people associated with a rental car sitting idle at the Scatter Creek rest stop on Interstate 5 northbound in Thurston County.</p> <p>Two of them were known to officers as having outstanding warrants for their arrest.</p> <p>While taking them into custody, officers saw an open gym bag with illegal drugs and a large stack of money inside the car.</p> <p>A search warrant of the car turned up 5.7 pounds of methamphetamine, 5.7 pounds of cocaine, 9.8 pounds of Fentanyl, 2.3 pounds of heroin, three fully loaded guns of which one was stolen, three soft body armor vests and \$90,000.</p> <p>The estimated street value of the drugs was \$1.2 million.</p> <p>All three people were booked into a Thurston County jail.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/11 Thieves target Auburn fire victims
SOURCE	https://www.q13fox.com/news/the-lowest-of-the-low-thieves-target-auburn-fire-victims-displaced-from-homes
GIST	<p>AUBURN, Wash. - Police report thieves are targeting families that were displaced from their homes by a fire in Auburn.</p> <p>On Sunday, a fire at the Riverfront Apartments in Auburn forced about 100 people from their homes.</p> <p>Auburn police told FOX 13 News on Wednesday that they started getting calls about thieves stealing from the complex.</p> <p>Police said a thief, or thieves, hit at least 15 units. Seven out of the 15 break-ins happened on Nov. 11, police said.</p> <p>"Everything is gone," said Barbara Shelton. "I mean, my father's ashes were stolen. I mean, they came in and went through [the] apartment like you wouldn't believe. It's disgusting."</p> <p>Shelton was staying at her sister's apartment this weekend when the fire broke out. She says she can't believe someone would take advantage of her family when they're already dealing with so much.</p> <p>"To me, that is the lowest of the low," said Auburn Mayor Nancy Backus. "That's what challenges me the most, is to understand how someone could be that horrible as to go in and profit, benefit from someone else's trauma," she added.</p>

	<p>Backus tells FOX 13 News she wanted to come out and show support for her community. She says the city is also working with the Auburn Food Bank to help give these families a glimmer of hope.</p> <p>Backus says it is not a requirement for on-site security with a large fire. However, she says there will be security on-site following this incident.</p> <p>One person was arrested on Nov. 11. Police say they found him in one of the damaged units with stolen goods in his backpack.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/11 LAPD: follow home robberies hit celebrities
SOURCE	https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2021-11-11/follow-home-robbery-spike-in-la-sweeps-up-celebrities-too
GIST	<p>A crew of masked robbers tracked actor and former BET host Terrence Jenkins to his Sherman Oaks home early Wednesday and attempted to block him in with an SUV, but he was able to flee in his car as shots were fired.</p> <p>Authorities say it's the latest in a series of follow-home robberies. Los Angeles Police Chief Michel Moore warned that his department has seen a spike in such crimes in recent weeks in more affluent areas of the Westside.</p> <p>Among those targeted in recent weeks was "Real Housewives of Beverly Hills" star Dorit Kemsley's Encino mansion, where masked robbers made off with as much as \$1 million in valuables. Detectives believe she was followed to her home before two men smashed their way into the house.</p> <p>LAPD Capt. Jonathan Tippet, who oversees the Robbery Homicide Division, said investigators believe multiple robbery crews are behind the series of crimes in the last few weeks.</p> <p>It was unclear how many follow-home robberies there have been and how many crews are involved. LAPD crime statistics show that citywide robberies in 2021 are only up 1.9% compared to 2020 and more than 15% down from in 2019.</p> <p>But at least two cases involving celebrities have generated media attention.</p> <p>Shortly before 3 a.m., Jenkins and a passenger in his car were surrounded by the masked bandits, and one of them ordered the actor out of the car at gunpoint, police said.</p> <p>Jenkins managed to evade the robbery crew's sport utility vehicle, but one of the assailants began firing at his car, according to Los Angeles police. Jenkins was able to flag down a California Highway Patrol cruiser about a mile from his home, and the robbers fled.</p> <p>LAPD officers immediately surrounded Jenkins' home, and officers went through the home to make sure there were no robbers inside.</p> <p>Tippet said it is too early to say who is behind it, but his detectives are working on identifying suspects. "People need to be aware of the surroundings, especially leaving nightclubs, restaurants and what have you," said LAPD Sgt. Hector Olivera.</p> <p>"It seems that the suspects are targeting individuals [with] expensive jewelry, expensive cars and things of that nature."</p> <p>Investigators compared the new spate of burglaries to the trend of so-called knock-knock burglaries four years ago, in which assailants would knock on the front doors of wealthier residents and then enter if no one was home. Among the celebrity victims were former Dodger Yasiel Puig, ex-Laker Nick Young and Nicki Minaj.</p>

Earlier this week, the LAPD put out a bulletin warning people of the crime trend they're seeing, which they described as "follow-home robberies."

The crews tend to watch those leaving upscale restaurants, bars, clubs and boutiques and follow the target home to rob them at gunpoint.

On Monday, LAPD detectives released a video of the two hooded and masked men breaking into the ["Real Housewives of Beverly Hills" star's home](#) shortly before 11 p.m. Oct. 27. In the video, one of the men shatters a sliding-glass window.

Once inside, LAPD investigators say the men confronted the TV star. "Both suspects threatened to kill her as she pleaded for her life and the lives of her young children," police said. "In fear for her safety, the victim complied with the suspects' demands and directed them to valuables. The suspects took high-end handbags, jewelry and watches."

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HEADLINE	11/11 Fake vaccine cards buyers get scammed
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/nov/11/fake-covid-vaccine-cards-scams
GIST	<p>For \$350, a Telegram user called NoVac Team offered to sell a Guardian reporter a fake vaccine card. The price, they said, would include having the reporter's vaccinated status registered in the Center for Disease Control (CDC) database which is connected to their health records.</p> <p>The CDC does not in fact maintain any vaccination records, nor does it provide a CDC-labeled vaccination record card for people. NoVac Team is a scammer, one of many on the messaging service Telegram who are offering fake vaccine cards to anti-vaxxers and then taking their money.</p> <p>The hidden market for fake vaccine cards has been growing as more states start to enforce vaccine mandates for public gatherings, and employers require proof of vaccination.</p> <p>Google searches for the term "fake vaccination cards" have also been rising as 4 January 2022, the date on which the national vaccine mandate affecting 83 million workers comes into effect, gets closer.</p> <p>But many of the people offering fake cards are themselves scammers who will take the money for a forged card and then disappear. The Guardian has identified seven sellers that were repeatedly flagged by a Telegram scammer warning group that seeks to alert people who might be looking to buy a fake vaccine card.</p> <p>Home Boy, who is based in Cameroon, sells cards for \$170 and claims he delivers within 48 hours. He said he had worked with more than 250 people in the past three months. When asked about rumors about rampant scams on the platform, he shares "proof" of vaccine cards he has made. "If we have to work together we have to start by building trust," he said.</p> <p>For \$149, a user called "Admin 24/24", based in Australia, said they could provide a digital vaccine pass "for every country".</p> <p>Another scammer going by the name of "Stella Bright" promised to send QR codes provided by doctors who "work with the government but are ready to save the world". When asked if this was a scam, she said: "We are part of those fighting fraudsters on Telegram and doing the right job. In a period of hardship like this one, we need heroes out there who can protect humans again since our government has failed us all."</p> <p>Getting the vaccine is free, straightforward and safe but some people have instead chosen to spend weeks trying to illegally obtain fake vaccine cards only to get scammed, by other criminals, for hundreds of dollars.</p>

It took Maggie two tries and \$450 before she realized she wasn't going to get the fake vaccine cards she was looking to buy.

The first seller that Maggie identified turned out to be a fraud. "The second time I was less trusting but still wanted to believe there was a way," she said. "I fell for it again. I was so mad."

The second seller sent her a strange message after receiving her initial payment. "I'll need a little more payment to complete your registration," they said. "We need to pay for a certain situation."

Maggie told the seller she had no more money. A single mother, she had borrowed \$350 to make the initial payment. Thinking that she might be getting scammed again, she pulled the plug.

"I don't trust any of them anymore. I haven't come across even one other person [trying to buy a fake vaccine card] who has found someone legit," Maggie told the Guardian. "The people who say they have – are usually in cahoots with the scammer or it's a scammer's alternate account."

While Maggie herself is fully vaccinated, something she says was "bullied" into, she has been looking for the card for her teenage daughter, who is an actor. Her daughter, she said, has been "treated like she has leprosy" in Hollywood because she doesn't have the vaccine, and is losing jobs and access to her acting classes and agents.

She found numerous groups on Telegram, with sellers offering fake cards for, as one puts it, "those who need results but not willing to take the vaccines".

"They tell you whatever you want to hear to get your money," she said.

Maggie believes almost everyone on the app are fraudsters. "That's why I decided to make a group warning people," she added. "I knew if I was in my situation and fell for it, people much more desperate and in worse situations than me were falling for it too." Maggie's group is now one of the first someone would see if they were looking for fake cards on the app.

One user in the Telegram scam alert group said she lost more than \$350 to a person who posed as a seller on Facebook. The user said they were desperate to buy a card to be able to see their family. "It takes me three days to make that much money," they wrote.

Sara, who is based in Australia, has been scammed by five people and lost more than \$1,000. She had coronavirus in March and told the Guardian she believes she has enough immunity from the experience and so doesn't need the vaccine.

In many states, the cards are low-tech paper slips that could, theoretically, be forged easily. Maggie said she couldn't just photocopy one because she didn't know anyone who had a blank card that she could copy.

She said the sellers often promise a deal that includes entering the buyer's vaccine record on the Health and Human Services database in the event that doctors need access to that record, although, again, such a database doesn't exist.

Some users claim they have reported the users on Telegram, but there appears to be minimal intervention from the app. Some of the accounts flagged as scams within Maggie's group disappeared a few days later. But others, like those mentioned above, remain active.

Telegram's community guidelines [strictly prohibit scams](#), but it's not clear what kind of action is taken against them. The Guardian contacted Telegram but did not receive a response.

In a statement to the Guardian, PayPal, which a lot of the scammers used to request money, said they don't permit sales of Covid-19 vaccine cards and have a "zero-tolerance policy" about such activities.

“We thoroughly investigate fraudulent activity to ensure our services are used in line with our acceptable use policy and adherence to local applicable laws,” they said. They did not respond to queries about how they vet such transactions.

At least some people are receiving fake cards. In September, [15 people in New Jersey and New York were arrested](#), including two women selling hundreds of fake cards for \$200 and thirteen buyers. The New Jersey woman, who was known as AntiVaxMomma on Instagram, offered both a physical copy as well as an entry into the fictional online database for an additional \$250.

In the same month, border officers stopped two shipments with a [total of 70 fake cards](#) in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Last month, border patrol caught nearly a thousand shipments, each carrying five to 100 fake cards.

While some of the cards are coming from outside the US, produced by international counterfeiters, there are many other ways to fake a card. A [police officer](#) and a colleague in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, were fired for using blank cards they had acquired from a cousin in the military.

Maggie and Sara have both said they are resigned to the possibility that they might never get a card.

“I think there may have been ways to get them at some point (early on),” said Maggie, “but after the mandates and threats of jail ... I think it’s probably only scammers at this point.”

Neither suggested their inability to cheat the system would push them towards getting themselves or their family members vaccinated.

*Names were changed to protect identities

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HEADLINE	11/11 Troubling: record homicide spike continues
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2021/nov/11/deeply-troubling-last-years-record-homicide-spike/
GIST	<p>Criminal justice experts are warning that the rise in U.S. homicides from 2020 — which was the biggest one-year increase in 60 years — is continuing into this year.</p> <p>FBI statistics show U.S. homicides jumped by nearly 30% last year compared to 2019, going from 16,669 to 21,570, and a new report released Monday suggests the deadly trend is not going away.</p> <p>The Council on Criminal Justice report shows the number of homicides in 22 cities was 4% higher during the first nine months of this year compared to the same period in 2020 — and 36% higher than in 2019.</p> <p>“Homicide increases above and beyond normal seasonal changes remain deeply troubling and require immediate action from policymakers,” the D.C.-based nonpartisan think tank said.</p> <p>The report notes that the homicide numbers are still significantly lower than the historical peaks seen nationwide in the 1990s — but the surge in killings in some cities has been staggering.</p> <p>Los Angeles saw a 16% increase in homicides between January and September, going from 259 to 301, Louisville, Kentucky, is up 24%, from 119 to 148 in that time and Austin, Texas, is up 81% — from 32 to 58.</p> <p>While some cities are seeing increases, others are breaking records. In the last 30 days, Indianapolis broke its homicide record of 215 set last year. Tucson, Arizona, broke its record of 79 in 2008 and Portland, Oregon, broke its record of 67 in 1987.</p> <p>Cities that in 2020 bowed to the demands of activists demanding cuts to police budgets are now scrambling to undo those cuts.</p>

In Portland, where violent political protests have been fixtures on city streets for months, Mayor Ted Wheeler announced a public safety plan Nov. 3 that includes adding 200 police officers to the force, which currently has 917 allotted positions — more than 100 of which are vacant.

“Many Portlanders no longer feel safe in their city,” said Mr. Wheeler, a Democrat. “Business owners have closed up shop for fear of doing business in high-risk areas. Commuters fear for their safety whether taking public transit or going by foot. Parents are scared to let their children play outside.”

He added that, “There is such a thing as too few officers ... and we’ve reached that point.”

The proposal to put \$5.2 million back into the Portland police budget comes 16 months after the city cut \$15 million out amid nationwide calls for policing reforms after the May 2020 death of George Floyd, a Black man murdered in Minnesota police custody.

In the nation’s capital Mayor Muriel Bowser, also a Democrat, made a similar proposal this summer to restore \$11 million to the city’s police department budget to hire 170 more officers after budget cuts in 2020.

“Last year, unfortunately, we saw a \$15 million reduction in [the police] budget and because of that reduction we have not been able to keep the hiring pipeline in full effect,” Miss Bowser said during a public safety briefing on July 28.

The District, a city of more than 705,000, has had 192 homicides this year through Tuesday, an increase of 12% from the 171 homicides during the same period last year.

The D.C. Council in August approved \$5 million of the mayor’s request for restored police funding, redirecting \$6 million into “violence-interruption” programs.

Police Chief Robert J. Contee III warned the council then that without the funding for new hires, the department was on track to have only 3,460 police officers by next September — which would be “the smallest police force our growing city has had in more than two decades.”

As the number of officers in the city continues to drop, crime stats across several categories — including homicides — continue to surge.

Greggory Pemberton, president of the D.C. Police Union, told The Washington Times that the city is on pace to surpass the 198 killings recorded in 2020 — the highest number in 16 years.

The increase in killings, he said, has “a direct correlation to the reduction in [the] number of police officers.”

“The way to fix this is to immediately begin hiring as many officers as the academy can handle,” Mr. Pemberton said.

Seattle Mayor Jenny Durkan, also a Democrat, issued an executive order on Oct. 29 allowing \$10,000 hiring bonuses for new police officers and \$25,000 hiring bonuses for experienced officers through the remainder of 2021.

Ms. Durkan said the order is necessary to address staffing shortages along with public safety concerns, and that “previous attempts to get [the city] council to consider an ordinance to operationalize these measures has failed.”

The order came after the city council rejected her request in July to reinstate a 2019 incentive program for hiring officers. The council also cut \$3 million from the Seattle Police Department’s \$400 million dollar budget last August.

The Pacific Northwest city of more than 737,000 has recorded fewer homicides so far this year (35) compared to the same time last year (52). The mayor, however, noted in the October order that there was a 35% uptick in shots fired incidents compared to the same time in 2020.

A police spokesperson said Tuesday that 224 of the department's 1,347 allotted officer positions are unfilled.

National Police Association spokeswoman Betsy Brantner Smith told The Times that there is a police recruitment and retention "crisis" throughout the nation.

The retired police sergeant said the crisis is "primarily in blue cities and counties" that decided "to vilify the entire profession based on the actions of one police officer in Minneapolis."

"What followed were police officers nationwide treated by the media, and often by their own cities, as criminals and racists for simply doing their jobs, while crime, especially homicides, rose to record numbers," Ms. Brantner Smith said.

As a result, law enforcement members "in cities like Portland, Chicago, Seattle, Tucson, New York and more either left their police departments for the suburbs, rural America or other pro-police areas or left the profession altogether, leaving many urban areas with a shortage of officers," she said.

She added that the association "finds this is unacceptable and dangerous, not just for police officers, but for the citizens they have sworn to serve and protect."

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